BETTER THAN THE BEST OF STORY PAPERS.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 500. FOR WEEK ENDING JULY 30TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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SHORT STORIES

No. 500. ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending July 30th, 1898.

The Story of the Safe.

ONE morning in the spring of 1894, the attention of persons walking along the Sudbury Street was attracted to a huge iron safe that was being put out from the warehouse of a well-known safe company, which for many years had occupied premises in that street.

The pavement was blocked, while a number of men, with great effort, by the aid of blocks, rollers, and the rest of the usual "tackle," moved the huge mass of iron on to a waggon by which it was to be transported to its destination.

Of course, passers-by wondered and queried as to the purpose and possible use of a safe of such unusual form and dimensions. But the curiosity of the questioners remained unsatisfied. No one standing by knew, and the officials and employés were too busy to answer those who ventured to interrupt with their inquiries.

This much, however, was evident—the safe was not new; indeed, the style and appearance of it indicated that it had been built many years ago for some special purpose, in which it had doubtless seen long service. Altogether, the appearance of this strange object so excited my curiosity that, although I was in a hurry to reach my office, I waited until the thing was finally placed on the waggon and the latter moved slowly up

EDITED BY C. Arthur Pearson

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the street. Then I entered the shop of the safe company, and being well acquainted with the manager, I asked if he could give me the old safe's history.

He replied that there was a strange story connected with it, known now only to himself. For certain reasons it never had been known except to two people, and they had been secretly bound, one by personal interest, and the other by a solemn vow, never to divulge the secret.

"This promise," he said, "has been faithfully kept; but now, all those in any way connected with or affected by it have passed beyond the dark river. The safe, which has stood here for many years like a spectre, reminding me of the dead past, has now, to my great relief, vanished for ever, and I know no good reason why the strange story should not be told.

"While I may withhold or change names in the recital, that which I am about to relate is true, and is capable, to some extent, of verification."

I decided that my hurry could wait for an hour. I wanted to hear that story. After inviting me to take a seat, the manager continued:

"More than fifty years ago a stranger of good appearance entered the shop of one Kershaw, a manufacturer at the corner of Green Street, inquired for the proprietor, and stated that he wanted constructed a strong, fireproof safe, giving the description and dimensions desired.

"By his conversation he appeared familiar with such work, and stated plainly how he wanted this one made and the kind of lock required. In answer to inquiries, he said that he was about to open a jewellery shop in Hanover Street, that he did not intend to do a retail business, but would have a considerable stock for wholesale trade. He added, also, that as he would be absent from his shop travelling on business from time to time, he desired a safe of large dimensions, where his stock could safely be stored during his absence, as well as at night.

"He required no shelves in the safe, and wanted it of unusual depth that he might put directly into it the cases and trunks in which he would keep or carry his stock.

"Being convinced of the stranger's respectability by a large deposit, and by the promise of full payment on completion and delivery, Mr. Kershaw accepted his order, and in due time the safe was completed and delivered.

"Soon after, a sign was put up on the shop: 'J. Williamson, Wholesale Dealer in Watches and Jewellery.' No great display was made in the window. Goods were received and shipped by the rear entrance opening on a narrow court. Apparently but little business was done at the shop, and frequently Mr. Williamson was absent visiting his customers.

"He contracted no indebtedness, paying cash for everything. He expressed a lack of confidence in banks and bankers, saying that he had once lost a large sum by the failure of a bank in which he had had an account, and for the future should be his own banker.

"Shortly after he began business, he took up his residence in a northern suburb, and regularly attended one of the churches in the neighbourhood. No subscription paper or contribution box ever passed him without a fairly liberal donation.

"In disposition he was quiet and retiring, and rarely spoke except in response to some inquiry. His earlier life he never referred to except in reply to one or two persons who ventured the question, when he briefly stated that he was the second son of a well-to-do country gentleman, that as that life was distasteful to him, he had gone to London and begun a commercial career.

"Within a year after he had ordered the safe, Mr. Williamson sought the hand of the eldest daughter of a respectable merchant, who attended the same place of worship. Having satisfied her parents as to his character and so forth, he was accepted, and with little delay married. By his quiet, correct life, liberality, and honest dealing, he secured the confidence and respect of all who knew him.

"About this time a strange epidemic of crime swept over this town. The houses of the wealthy were entered and robbed of their valuable contents. Packages of money were boldly seized within the very inclosures of the bank, the thief escaping through some passage, or by slipping into a house and fastening the door behind him; the satchels of bank messengers, filled with valuable contents, were suddenly snatched and the robber eluded pursuit. At night persons were garroted and robbed in the public thoroughfares.

"The police force was small, and, although they exercised unusual diligence, every few days some new and startling crime, committed with wonderful skill and boldness, was announced. It was thought that a gang of experienced criminals had made a descent upon the town so long exempt from crime, and every stranger was under suspicion, and carefully watched.

"One night, not long after his marriage, Mr. Williamson was found on the bridge in a dazed, exhausted condition, and assisted to his home. When sufficiently recovered, he stated that while crossing the bridge he was suddenly seized from behind, his throat grasped so that he could not cry out, and his pocketbook, containing a large sum of money, taken from him. He struggled to free himself from his unknown assailant until he gasped for breath, and fell exhausted, unconscious.

"On the following day Mr. Williamson offered a liberal reward for the arrest of the highway robber, but as he had not seen him he could give no clue to aid in the detention of the criminal. Some of the persons robbed, however, who had caught a glimpse of the thief, described a dark person with heavy black hair, wearing blue spectacles; and as it was believed that he and the assailant of Williamson were one, search was made for a person answering this description.

"One evening the whole town was startled by the news of a crime just committed, bolder than any that had preceded it. The premises of Davis and Palmer, jewellers, in Market Street, had been entered between the hours of seven and eight p.m., and the most valuable part of their stock taken, the trays containing many valuable watches, diamonds, and jewellery, having all been emptied.

"As was customary, the shop was closed at seven o'clock, and a night watchman came on duty within an hour after. On this evening when the watchman entered he found the cases stripped of their valuable contents, and immediately gave the alarm. The police were sent for, and investigation began.

"It was soon discovered that persons near the shop had seen a trap drive up, a man alight, unlock and enter the shop. Not long afterwards he came out bringing two heavily-laden bags, one after the other, which he placed in the trap and drove away.

"At the time no suspicion had been excited, as there was nothing peculiar about his manner of entering or leaving the premises. From his course of action the thief was evidently well acquainted with the fact that

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there was a brief period between the closing of the shop and the arrival of the watchman; and having at some time, doubtless, obtained an impress of the key, and made a duplicate, the task of entering and robbing the premises at a time when it was least expected, was an easy one.

"In those days the detective force was not what it is now, but we had an experienced man in the town, and when it was known that a large reward had been offered for the discovery and return of the goods, irrespective of the arrest and conviction of the criminal, Capper devoted himself at once to that object.

"As a first step he visited every stable in the town, but with no great result. The owner of the trap was found, but could give no information except that it had been hired in the afternoon by a dark-haired man wearing coloured glasses, and that late in the evening the cart and horse were found without any driver in Northgate Street.

"As weeks passed and the mystery seemed no nearer a solution, the strange robbery became the universal topic of conversation. Every clue and suspicion was followed up. Strangers were arrested and obliged to prove their innocence. Everybody became a detective.

"Some weeks after the robbery a stranger came to the parcel office with a trunk which he wished to send to London. Something in the manner of the man, an unnatural, half-disguised appearance, excited the suspicion of the alert, sharp-eyed clerk, who had been cautioned by Capper, and while he proceeded to make out the receipt he secretly sent a messenger to the officer.

"Upon his arrival, Capper instantly began to question the stranger, demanding to know the contents of the trunk. His inquiries were frankly answered with proper explanation, and the key produced that the officer might verify the same by examination. The innocent frankness of the stranger disarmed Capper, and, half apologising for not accepting his statements as sufficient, he stooped to unlock the trunk, when suddenly the stranger leapt by him and out through the door, barring it after him by thrusting a stout cane through the iron handle.

"Throwing himself against the door, the officer soon broke the improvised bolt and rushed off in pursuit, following the fugitive down through street after street into a narrow court, where the man had disappeared. But though there was no outlet other than that by which he had entered, a thorough search of this place a few moments after failed to discover the fugitive, or the way of his escape.

"After the houses in the court were searched without discovering any trace of the probable thief, the proprietors of the shops facing Hanover Street on each side and having rear entrances in this court were sent for. Among these was Mr. Williamson, but as it was ascertained at his residence that he was absent, travelling, his premises were forcibly opened. Here, however, as in the others, no person or sign of one was found.

"The burglar, for such an examination of the trunk proved to be, was never captured, nor was trace of him discovered, although diligent search of that neighbourhood was made by the whole police force.

"Not long after the town was again startled, this time by the announcement in the morning papers of the mysterious disappearance and probable murder of Mr. Williamson. He was known to carry large sums of money upon his person, and as there was no good explanation of his absence, it was thought most probable that he had been robbed and murdered. In fact, there were some who reported hearing at night cries for help in the vicinity of his shop, and a hat which had been found one morning in the street near his premises proved to be one worn by him on the morning when he last left his home.

"Information was sought by advertisement in the newspapers, with promise of liberal reward, but all investigation proved unavailing.

"After some weeks of inquiry and search, the general suspicion that he had been murdered and his body done away with, became a settled conviction; but his faithful, trusting wife refused to believe him dead, and her father finally proceeded to London, to see what information, if any, could be gained from those with whom his son-in-law had had dealings in the metropolis.

"What he ascertained there I do not know, but immediately on his return he came to my employer for a workman to go to the shop and open in his presence the safe containing the stock stored therein.

"After some drilling the bolt was sprung and the door swung open, disclosing a sight at which I started back affrighted and amazed, and which so horrified the troubled and anxious father that he fell like a dead man on the floor.

"There, within the safe, lay the dead body of Mr. Williamson, the trusted and respected jewellery merchant.

"On recovering consciousness the father, heart-broken, implored me, for his sake and the fair name of his daughter, never to make known the sight then revealed, and to assist him in concealing all evidence which would tend to disclose it. To both these requests I at once acceded, and that night I helped him to carry out the body privately for burial—no matter where.

"An examination of the safe disclosed a hardly discernible aperture drilled through the back near the top, from which, on the inside, hung a flexible tube by which respiration was made possible for a person inclosed, and through which a noise from without could reach the inmate.

"On the inside of the door a hole had been cut so that the key could be inserted and the bolt thrown back. The handle of this key had broken off, leaving the key in the lock. There were indications that food and water had been stored in the safe, but none remained; even the shoes bore marks of the teeth, as if gnawed for sustenance.

"A black wig and a pair of blue spectacles lay on the floor of the safe. Seeing all this, we soon conjectured for what purpose this safe was made and used—a temporary place of quick retreat.

"We wondered if the key was broken by accident in the haste to elude that last pursuit, or in attempting to re-open the door. We thought we knew now, though each was silent, the mystery of the many recent crimes; but one thing was certain, they ceased, and the author of them was never found or arrested."

J. Clarke.

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A Splendid Make-Up.

SIN LOO paused again beneath a lamp-post and again examined the slip of paper held in his hand. On it was written an address.

To that address Sin Loo had been travelling for over an hour; for the contents of the twin baskets hanging from the ends of the pole across his shoulders were being impatiently awaited by the person who had penned the directions. A dozen times had Loo held the paper forth to passers-by and softly asked: "Wha-lat?" And not once had assistance been denied. Some, captivated by Loo's artless and helpless countenance, had even walked to the nearest corner and from there indicated the right direction.

Already, had he but known it, Loo had passed the house that he was seeking a half dozen times, for during the last half-hour he had been breathlessly hurrying round the same circle of streets. And now he studied the paper again with perplexed eyes.

But to him it was only a series of faint black scratches, sadly deficient in symmetry and sense, when judged by his idea of what correct writing should be.

Sin Loo sighed, shook his head despondently, and clutching the bit of paper tightly, looked about him in bewilderment and alarm.

It was very dark; the streets were practically deserted, and the scurrying cabs and carriages with the blazing lights suggested to Sin Loo the passing of so many fiery-orbed dragons of the kind impressed upon his memory by his grandmother's fairy tales, told years before under the twilight of Canton skies. Ah! would that he had never left that city to seek fortune in Australia!

Presently, as he hurried on, his eye caught sight of a figure in the distance, and in a moment he was fleeing along the pavement as though the evil one himself were upon his heels. On he fled, the basket swaying and bobbing about him as though suddenly invested with life. Then he paused and glanced fearfully back, and a long-drawn sigh of relief escaped him; the Man in Authority—the demon, as Loo regarded him—was no longer in sight.

Sin Loo, during his brief residence amongst them, had learnt to look upon policemen as the incarnation of all evil, and to fly from them as he would from the purple ogres of his grandmother's tales.

Out of all reckoning now, Sin Loo held forth his precious slip of paper and looked about for assistance. But no one was to be seen until, presently, his troubled gaze, searching the dim street, encountered a wonderful sight. At a little distance a canopy of striped cloth reached from a residence into the street, and from under it shone a radiant blaze of light. Sin Loo was but eighteen, and curiosity seized upon him. Cautiously he moved forward. A throng of people barred the way, and Sin Loo crept into the shadow of the group.

From there he could see a strip of beautiful crimson carpet running from the street across the pavement, up a flight of high, broad steps, and through a portal luminous with golden light, whence issued the subdued strains of what seemed celestial music. Surely, thought Sin Loo, here lived the blessed gods!

Wondering curiosity got the upper hand of fear, and Sin Loo began to worm his way through the crowd. But the swinging baskets seriously retarded progress, until the onlookers, becoming aware of his presence, opened up a path for him with cries of, "Here's another of 'em! Make way there for Li Hung Chang!" and Sin Loo, smiling timidly upon all, advanced until the beautiful crimson carpet lay at his feet.

He stretched out one little slipper until it rested caressingly upon the edge of the carpet, and then heaved a sigh of ecstasy. The carpet was for all the world like the soft down on the breasts of the white ducks that his grandfather raised on the Choo-Kiang.

Suddenly Loo darted back with a cry of absolute terror. There was a great noise, the people behind pressed forward, a carriage with the fiercest of eyes stopped, with a clanking of chains, before the awning; two resplendent beings in red and blue livery darted forward and swung open the door; and an angel—two angels—in white, stepped out. But it was not the carriage that had frightened Sin Loo. Nay; but there, not two steps away, terrible, demoniac, stood a huge Man in Authority, waving a huge stick toward Sin Loo.

With a yell of agony, Sin Loo strove to retreat. But no, the crowd held him. There was but one way open. His profane feet trod the carpet of the gods, and with three bounds he stood in the portal of Paradise.

Struck with the danger of his predicament, Sin Loo glanced fearfully back, only to meet the eyes of the Demon who barred the way. He was laughing loudly with the rest of the throng, but to Sin Loo he appeared to be gnashing his teeth with disappointment over the escape of his prey. To remain there was to be lost. What should he do?

Sin Loo gazed about him, and for a moment was lost in awe and admiration of his surroundings. Near at hand, lined by flowering shrubs and waving palms, rose a great staircase, winding slowly upward, to be lost in another flood of light from above. About him were blazing lights, banks of brilliant blossoms, graceful festoons; in his nostrils what seemed the scent of a thousand gardens, in his ears such music as they had never heard. A burst of laughter aroused him.

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Down the great staircase, holding their brilliant draperies about them, came a group of goddesses. In desperation Sin Loo darted to a great curtain, whose folds shed a dozen hues under the light. Behind this he would hide. He lifted a corner, when, as though by magic means, the curtain was whisked from his grasp, and before him, dazzling with jewels and radiant apparel, with hand outstretched, stood—ah, yes, it could only be the queen of the goddesses, waiting to rebuke his presumption!

With quaking heart, Sin Loo turned to flee. But lo! the entrance was gone from sight. Behind him stood sentinel two huge ogres in shining armour, and clasping great glittering blades, the sight of which sent thrills of terror coursing through the marrow of Loo's trembling bones. Before him stood, sat, or walked a multitude of gods.

He closed his eyes and waited annihilation. Presently he opened them again and found himself still alive. Then he sought to escape in the throng, flattening himself and his awkward burdens against the nearest flower-screened wall, and hiding behind the great marble pillars and tall palms. But he could not avoid notice; murmured comment greeted his stealthy progress, and the eyes of gods and goddesses followed him.

Then the music began again, and in a moment the great gold and white hall was a wonderful kaleidoscope. for the inhabitants of Paradise, in their gorgeous dresses, with their flashing gems and waving plumes, were dancing together. Sin Loo, forgetting his terror for the moment, peeped from behind a tall and feathery fern, and thought that never had his most magnificent dreams pictured Paradise one thousandth part as wonderful as it was.

Before him two gods, one in a mass of pale blue silk and creamy lace, the other clad in russet leather, slashed here and there to show a lining of crimson satin, were talking together. Sin Loo listened with might and main, but the words were strange, and not to be understood.

"Magnificent sight, isn't it?" the one in blue was saying in languid tones. "Ought to be, though, since they've been over six months in preparing for it. I hear there were over a thousand invitations sent out."

"Yes," replied the other. "By-the-way, have you seen Jack Vernon and his wife?"

"Can't say; probably wouldn't have known them if I had."

"Yes you would, though. Mrs. Jack told me the other day that she had secured the finest rig out of them all. Seems that she went to a Chinese costumier or whatever you call him—dressmaker, tailor, if you like—and ordered costumes for herself and Jack. She's to be a Celestial princess or something, and Jack's to be an emperor, I believe. Can't understand what's keeping them."

"I saw a Chinaman awhile ago carrying a couple of baskets slung over his arm. Fine get-up, but didn't look much like an emperor."

"Yes, saw him myself. Everybody's speaking of him. Never saw a finer Chinaman make-up in my life. Acts his part, too. I say, if you see Jack and his wife, let me know."

Then the pair hurried away, and Sin Loo now noticed that both music and dancing had ceased, and that all Paradise was flocking to the far end of the hall. To be alone was more terrifying than to be amidst the crowd. In Loo's case safety lay in numbers, and with baskets flopping to and fro, he scuttled down the room, a ludicrous little figure, slipping and sliding on the waxed surface of the ball-room floor like a duck on ice.

The queen of the goddesses, assisted by lesser deities, was going and coming amongst the crowd, forming it couple by couple into line of march. Here Richelieu was giggling with a nineteenth-century milkmaid; there one of his Swiss guards was whispering soft nothings into the pink ear of a Highland lass; yonder, a black-garbed and black-masked executioner leant on his axe and joked with a pretty Parisian cyclienne. Soldiers and peasants, kings and queens, lords and ladies, favourites of mythology, and celebrities of nursery rhyme, were all here, waiting for the orchestra, hidden in the balcony above, to strike up the martial air. Already the hostess had raised her fan, when suddenly, her gaze sweeping about the hall, caught sight of a skulking blue-clad figure. She advanced and seized Sin Loo by the sleeve.

"This way, please!" And Loo, his knees knocking together with fright, was led to the rear of the line.

"You will take me in, please," said the hostess. Again she lifted her fan, and again lowered it without making the expected signal, for across the floor from the entrance hurried a lady in simple evening costume, while at the alcoved doorway, his entrance impeded for a moment by the two knights-at-arms, who raised gleaming blades to bar his progress, a man in conventional broadcloth and linen paused with a look of serio-comic helplessness.

"It was our costumes!" exclaimed the lady breathlessly, between her hostess' expressions of pleasure and playful reprimand. "They never came, and we couldn't miss this, so here we are at the eleventh hour, plain nobodies."

"What was the trouble?"

"I don't know. I only know they were incomparable. I ordered them specially, and they were to be delivered this evening. Ko Ha, the Chinese——"

"Gracious, what's that?"

Sin Loo, grovelling on his knees, was begging for mercy in high-pitched, terror-filled vowels. He had heard his master's name, and knew that the time of reckoning had come at last. Mrs. Jack sprang forward.

"I really believe it is Ko Ha's man! Where——"

But there was no need to ask. Sin Loo's baskets lay beside him, and from one of them flowed a dazzling stream of gold-embroidered silks and satins.

"My costume!" cried Mrs. Jack.

"And mine!" cried her husband, as, laughing, he drew the treasures from the other basket.

"You—you wretch," cried Mrs. Jack. "Where have you been? How came you here? Why——"

But Sin Loo was deaf to all questioning. In his shrill treble he was gabbling monotonously all the prayers ever taught him by his beloved grandmother.

Then the orchestra played an extra waltz, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Vernon hurried away to don their costumes, and Sin Loo, still clutching the slip of paper tightly in his hand, was conducted through the great portal, down the beautiful crimson carpet, and so forth from the presence of the outraged gods.

The throng on the pavement was gone. Only the Demon remained. With a startled cry Sin Loo looked once, and then fled into darkness. And, strange to tell, the Demon only grinned!

A. C. K.

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That Fatal Erasure

MISS AMELIA LUNT was the only child of two good people who had not married until they reached the years which find most wedded pairs with their children well grown up about them. They had been happy, however, and when they died, left their daughter a little income which, by close pinching, she could manage to live upon.

Amelia was not a pretty girl, but thousands of plainer girls had married and settled, while she remained a spinster. Perhaps the fact that she was by no means a good-natured person had something to do with it.

In her youth she had scornfully rejected advances of well-disposed young men who belonged to the mechanic classes, and had declared that she would only give her hand and heart to a merchant, a physician, or a clergyman. Eligible merchants were rare. The doctors were both married. The clergymen had large families.

Amelia at last awoke to the knowledge that she was getting on in life; and that if she was not careful, people would find it out.

But for that dreadful family Bible in which the record of her birth was written, she would have felt safe in slicing off ten years of her life—a proceeding which she fancied would increase her value in the eyes of a certain Mr. Dumsday, who had recently paid her a few solemn calls. He was really an old man himself, but the older the man, the younger, generally, is his choice of a wife.

Poor Amelia! She eyed the well-thumbed Bible (which her companion and assistant, Cousin Betsy Baker, always would have upon a stand in the parlour) with absolute horror.

She sat over the fire late one night, thinking over the matter.

Who knew her exact age? Cousin Betsy. But Cousin Betsy would not wish to quarrel with her, and was too old a woman to think her anything but young. The clergyman who baptised her, and the family doctor were dead. The dear old gentleman who had lodged with them from her babyhood went to Australia years before, and was probably dead also. Good Mr. Locke! What a nice gentleman he was! But she should never hear of him again. Yes, it was safe. She would do it.

It was night—half-past twelve at least. Amelia arose. She stood before the fire with her back to it, and took the candlestick in her hand.

Anyone who had observed her would certainly have believed that she was going straight to Cousin Betsy's room to end that lady's life by a jab of the sharp little knife blade, but she paused at the candlestick, knelt down, opened the family Bible at the flyleaf, and slowly, cautiously, began to scrape, scrape, scrape at the last two figures of the record of her birth.

Then she crossed the room, took a pen and inkstand, wrote two other figures in the place of those she had erased, blew upon the leaf until it was dry, carefully touched up the rest of the record to match in brightness, and drew back to read the amended lines, which now plainly stated to all beholders that she had entered this world thirty years before instead of forty.

"Amelia!"

It seemed to come from above. She looked up, expecting to see something dreadful. It was repeated.

"Amelia, aren't you coming to bed?"

It was only Cousin Betsy speaking from the upper landing.

All in a cold perspiration, Amelia managed to reply that she would come in a moment, and then, closing the Bible and putting away the writing materials, she crept upstairs, a world of horrible unseen things close after her.

Mr. Dumsday regularly "came a-courting" now. And he was a rich widower, whose married daughter professed herself anxious that he should have someone to take care of him. Amelia had quite made up her mind that lavender should be the colour of her wedding dress.

And the two were sitting together one evening talking confidentially about rheumatism and its best liniment, when the bell rang and a tall, lean gentleman, in a suit of black, was ushered into the parlour.

"Miss Amelia Lunt, I believe," he said.

"Yes, sir," said Amelia.

The gentleman bowed, handed her a card with "C. Dodridge, Solicitor," upon it, and took the seat she offered. Mr. Dumsday didn't offer to retire, and the solicitor began.

"I understand that your respected parents are no more, madam," said the solicitor. "They would remember better than you do, probably, a period of thirty years ago, when one Mr. Locke lodged with them."

"Yes, sir," said Amelia, growing red in the face. "I've heard them speak of him."

"Ah," said the gentleman, "he was a dear friend as well as a client of mine. He died about two months ago

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in Sydney. He was wealthy at the time of his death, and he never forgot the extreme kindness of the friends of thirty years ago, who knew him in his days of comparative poverty. Yes, they are gone also; but the little girl who waited on him so lovingly, still lives. She was eleven years old at that time. I suppose I address her?"

"No, sir," said Miss Lunt, redder than ever, as Mr. Dumsday turned an attentive ear to this dreadful statement—and feeling that one lie begot many, and that having fibbed in the family Bible, she must stick to it or die—"No, sir. I was not born at that date."

"I have my old friend's record," said Mr. Dodridge—"the date of his arrival here—you were one month old then—and the date of his departure. Plainly you were eleven years of age. You attached yourself fondly to my old friend's heart, madam."

"No, I didn't," said Amelia tartly. "I ought to know. I never saw him. I was born just after he left, I've been told. There's the Bible on the table; look at the date."

She opened the volume at the fatal flyleaf; the lawyer perused it slowly.

"I see, I see," he said. "Well, well; and who was this little girl?"

Agony of agonies! Here was another lie needed. Mr. Dumsday's eyes opened widely. He listened more intently. He looked at the lawyer, he looked at the lady. She must fib again, and blackly this time.

"That was a little adopted child who died," said Amelia faintly. "They didn't think they should have any family of their own."

"I see," said the lawyer rising, "I see. My friend hoped she had grown to be a woman. Good-day."

"And I can't see why you should come here to add to a lady's age," said Miss Lunt. "I'm sure it's not polite."

"Madam," said Mr. Dodridge, hat in hand, "I have an excuse; Mr. Locke, good old man, left all his fortune to that little girl. Had she lived she would be an immense heiress. I paved the way—paved the way, that's all."

He departed; Miss Lunt bowed him out. After all, what did it matter? Fortune, in the person of Mr. Dumsday, was at her feet, and she had saved ten years of her age in his eyes.

But, alas! what ailed Mr. Dumsday? He had risen; his face looked pale, his countenance anxious. He shook his head slowly, went to the candlestick, looked at the fly-leaf of the family Bible, and spoke as follows:

"Amelia, from what I see you're just about thirty years of age, aren't you?"

"Yes," said Amelia wonderingly.

"This is a trial to me, Amelia," said Mr. Dumsday. "I know I've been to blame if it come to nothing, but we must part."

"Did you think I was younger?" said Amelia. "Is that it?"

"No, Amelia," said Mr. Dumsday; "but I took a little oath to my daughter never to marry a second wife under forty. People generally think you are about that age, so I picked you out. Good-bye, Amelia. I hope I haven't spoilt your prospects. Some younger man will——"

"Oh!" cried Amelia. "Oh, come back! I'll tell the truth. I am forty!"

"Records can't lie. I saw it in the Bible," said Mr. Dumsday. "Farewell. It's a disappointment, but I must bear it."

ADA NIGHTINGALE.

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The Old Windmill.

Maitre Cormille was an old miller. He had worked his windmill for sixty years, and it was like a piece of himself.

You can imagine what the effect on him was when the steam flour-mills were introduced. For a week he ran about the village, trying to stir up the people and warning them against the folks who were coming to poison Provence with their new and dangerous devices.

"Don't have anything to do with it," he cried. "To use steam for making bread is an invention of the Evil One. I work with the Mistral and the Tramontana winds, which are the breath of the good God."

He was really quite eloquent on the subject, but the people paid no attention whatever, and went on getting their flour at the new mills.

Then the old fellow shut himself up in his mill and lived all alone like a wild animal. He would not even keep with him his grandchild Vivette, a girl of fifteen, who, since the death of her parents, had only her grandfather to look to.

The poor little thing had to go into service at the farms, and yet he seemed fond of her, and would walk a dozen miles to one of the farms where she was working. And when he got there he would sit looking at her for a long time, often with the tears in his eyes.

In the neighbourhood people thought that he had sent her away because he grudged the cost of keeping her, and that it did him no credit to let the poor child go about from one farm to another exposed to the bullying of the masters and all the dangers that beset a girl in her unprotected state.

It was also thought very queer that a respectable man like Maitre Cormille should go about such an object. He looked such a scarecrow, almost in rags as he was, with his battered old hat, that we felt quite ashamed to have him sit with us at church, and I supposed he must have guessed it, for after a bit he took to sitting in the free seats.

There was a mystery in his life. For a long time no one in the village had taken any corn to him to grind, and yet his mill was always going, and in the evening we used to meet the old man coming home, driving before him a donkey laden with great sacks of flour.

"Good evening, Maitre Cormille!" we would say. "How's business with you? I see your mill is always going."

"Yes, children, it is going still," he would answer cheerfully. "Thank God, we don't want for work!"

Then if you asked him where on earth the work came from, he would purse up his lips, and answer:

"Oh, I work for exportation!"

And there was no more to be got out of him.

As to putting one's foot inside his mill, no one ever dreamt of doing that. The door was always shut when one passed, and the great sails always turning, and a wretched-looking, uncanny black cat taking the air on the wall, and looking spitefully at you.

Well, the secret was discovered at last, and this was how it happened.

I had noticed for some time that little Vivette and my eldest boy were getting fond of one another; and I had nothing against it, because after all the name of Cormille had always been held in respect among us, and then it would be rather nice to have a bright little thing like that about the house. Only I thought the thing ought to be done in proper form, so I went up to the mill one day to talk it over with the grandfather.

Ah, the old sorcerer! You should have seen how he received me. I could not get him to open the door. I said my say as well as I could through the keyhole, and all the while there was his miserable skeleton of a black cat yelling like a demon just over my head.

The old man never gave me a chance to explain myself. He called out that I had better take myself off, and that

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if I were in a hurry to have my boy married I could get hold of a girl at the steam mills.

You can imagine how angry I was, but I thought I had better leave the old fellow to himself, and so I went back and told the poor children the result of my visit.

They could hardly believe it, and asked me as a favour to let them go and see what they could do. I had not the courage to refuse them, and off the couple went.

When they arrived, Maître Cormille had just gone out. The door was double-locked, but the old fellow before starting had left his ladder outside, and suddenly it occurred to them that they would get in at the window, which they did.

Strange to say, the large room was empty, not a sack of grain to be seen, nor a speck of flour on the floor or the cobweb-covered walls. Upstairs in the old man's room everything had the same look of poverty and desolation. A wretched bed, a few rags lying about, a piece of bread on the stairs, and then in the corner a sack or two from which some chalk and plaster had dropped.

This was his secret. It was this that he brought home in the evening to save the honour of the mill and to make believe that it still had work. Poor old mill! Poor Cormille? A long while ago the steam mills had taken away his last customer. The sails still went round, but there was nothing to grind.

The two poor young things came back crying, and told me what they had seen. It wrung my heart to hear them. Without losing a moment, I went to the neighbours, and told them the whole tale in half-a-dozen words.

We agreed at once to carry to the mill all the grain we could scrape together. No sooner said than done. All the village turned out, and we set off in procession with a tribe of donkeys laden with flour—real flour this time!

As we drew near we saw the door wide open, and Maître Cormille sitting before it on a sack of plaster, weeping with his face in his hands. He had just learned that his secret had been discovered.

"Now I have only to die; the mill is dishonoured!"

He was sobbing fit to break your heart, and calling the mill by all sorts of pet names, speaking of it as if it were a living thing.

The donkeys pulled up on the green before the mill, and we all called out:

"Hallo, miller! Hallo, Maître Cormille!"

Maître Cormille started, and well he might. He saw the sacks with the beautiful wheat burst out of them. He took some in his hand, and said, laughing and crying at the same time:

"It is wheat! Good heavens! it is really wheat! Let me look at it." Then turning to us: "I knew you would come back to me," he said; "all these steam mills are frauds."

We wanted to carry him through the village in triumph; but he would not have it.

"No, no, children. I must go and give my mill something to eat; it is long enough, poor thing, since she has had anything between her teeth."

It was really touching to see the poor old fellow running here and there, emptying the sacks, working the mill, while the corn was being crushed between the grindstones and the fine flour dust flew up to the ceiling.

Let me do myself and my friends the justice to say that from that time we never let the old man lack work. But when he died the sails of our last windmill ceased to turn, for no one took the place. Ah, well, they have had their day, like the periwigs and stage-coaches; it is the way of the world.

A. D.

Four Letters that Were Never Written.

"GEORGE FERGUSON, what does this mean?"

The voice was that of Mrs. Ferguson—shrill, piercing and ominous.

"What does what mean?" asked George.

"This letter!"

She held it up.

"Laura, have you been——"

"No, I haven't been searching your pockets. You know I haven't. I was moving your coat from this chair, and a letter fell out. This is the letter. It is directed to you, and it's in a woman's hand. You haven't told me of any correspondence you are carrying on with——"

"Open it and read it, Laura," interrupted Mr. Ferguson. "If there was any letter in my pocket I didn't know it. Go ahead and read it. Perhaps it is a millinery bill."

Scorning to reply to this, Mrs. Ferguson took out the letter and ran her eye over it.

"Oh, you didn't know this was in your pocket!" she piped. "You didn't know it! Perhaps it's a millinery bill, is it? Listen! 'My dearest George'—so you're somebody else's dearest George, are you?—'My dearest George: When are you coming to see me again? I am very lonely'—she is very lonely, is she? Oh, you two-faced hypocrite!—'If you can't come, George, dearest, do write!'—she wants you to write if you can't come, does she?—'You can't think, dearest George, how I miss——'"

"What nonsense are you reading, Laura?" demanded George, beginning to be roused. "Do you mean to say——"

"I mean to say I am reading this letter you told me to read, Mr. Ferguson. I am reading this letter I found in your—that dropped out of your pocket. You don't know anything about it, don't you? 'You can't think, dearest George—'"

"Laura, are you silly enough to think that's genuine——"

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"I am a silly, am I, Mr. Ferguson? Well, I'll just show you——"

"Let me see the letter."

"Let you see it? What do you want to see it for? Oh, no, Mr. Ferguson! I am going to keep it and show it to my mother!"

"Well, hold it so that I can look at it. I promise you solemnly I will not attempt to take it away from you."

"I'll see that you don't. Here it is. Now look at it. Stay where you are, George Ferguson! Don't you come a step nearer!"

"How can I see it ten feet away? Lay it down and then come and tie my hands behind me. If you are afraid I'll——"

"Oh, yes! Lay it down and you'll snatch it! I see through you! What's the use of pretending you never saw this before?"

"There doesn't seem to be any use in it—that's a fact. Nevertheless, I assure you, Laura, on my honour as a man——"

"On your honour! H'mph!"

"Yes, on my honour—h'mph! I have never seen that letter before. I never put it in my pocket. I didn't know it was there; I am not anybody else's dearest George, and that letter is a clumsy fake got up by somebody who wants to have a little fun with me——"

"I wish I could believe it! Oh, George! George!" (Sobs.)

* * * * *

"Look here, you chaps," said George Ferguson, the next day when he went into the office where he was employed, "that was a good joke some one of you played on me when you put that letter in my pocket yesterday, but it threatens to break up a happy family, and I ask as a favour that the chap who did it will just write a letter to my wife and tell her it was a bit of fun, and that I am not to blame in the slightest degree. I don't want to know who it was. All I ask is that the thing shall be straightened out."

* * * * *

It was late in the afternoon. There came a ring at the doorbell pertaining to the Ferguson dwelling, and a messenger delivered a letter addressed to Mrs. George Ferguson.

She opened it and read:

"Dear Mrs. Ferguson,—In a spirit of mischief I slipped a letter in your husband's coat pocket yesterday which I fear may have fallen into your hands, and in order to atone for any misunderstanding it may possibly have caused I wish to say that I wrote it myself and that it is purely imaginary.—With great respect I subscribe myself yours truly."

This was signed "Marcellus Hankinson."

Hardly had she finished reading this when another messenger came and left another letter. It read thus:

"My Dear Mrs. Ferguson,—I have a little confession to make. Yesterday in a thoughtless moment I wrote a letter purporting to come from some woman and dropped it into your husband's pocket. For fear you may have seen it I take occasion to assume the responsibility for the clumsy joke and to apologise for it.—With great respect, yours sincerely."

The signature was "Oliver Peduncle."

Then there came another letter—also by special messenger. It was as follows:

"My Dear Madam,—Pardon me for addressing you, but I wish to plead guilty to the perpetration of a foolish joke on your husband yesterday. I wrote a love letter (signed 'Dollie,' if I remember rightly) and slipped it into Mr. Ferguson's coat pocket. Fearing it may have met your eye I wrote this to exonerate your husband and to take upon myself the entire blame for the silly performance.—Respectfully yours."

It was signed "A. Spoonamore."

The bewildered woman had hardly perused this note and laid it on the table with the others when a fourth came. It was to this effect:

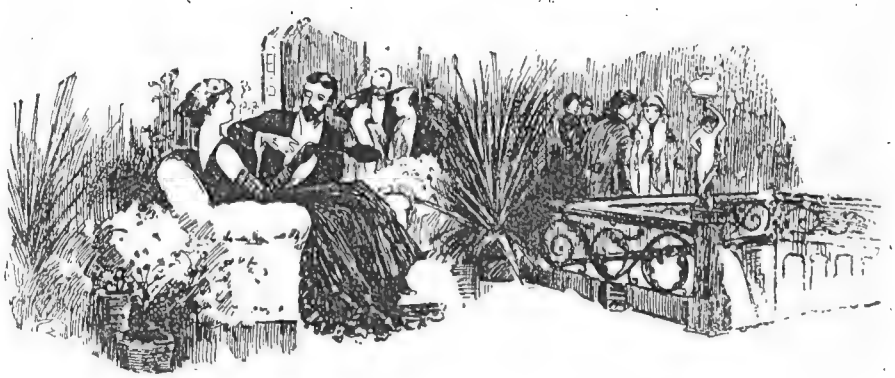
"Permit me, my dear Mrs. Ferguson, to atone for an act of thoughtlessness committed yesterday. Yielding to a hasty impulse, I wrote a letter to your husband purporting to come from some feminine admirer. This I placed in one of the pockets of his coat, unknown to him. As it may possibly have fallen into your hands, I take the liberty of assuring you that I alone am to blame for the stupid joke, and to express my hearty contrition."

The signature to this was "Wesley Higintop."

About two hours later Mr. Ferguson came home. He was whistling, with apparent unconsciousness of any domestic trouble, past, present or to come.

"George," exclaimed Mrs. Ferguson, in a high-pitched voice, as she met him at the door, "where are those other letters?"

Percy Goodman.



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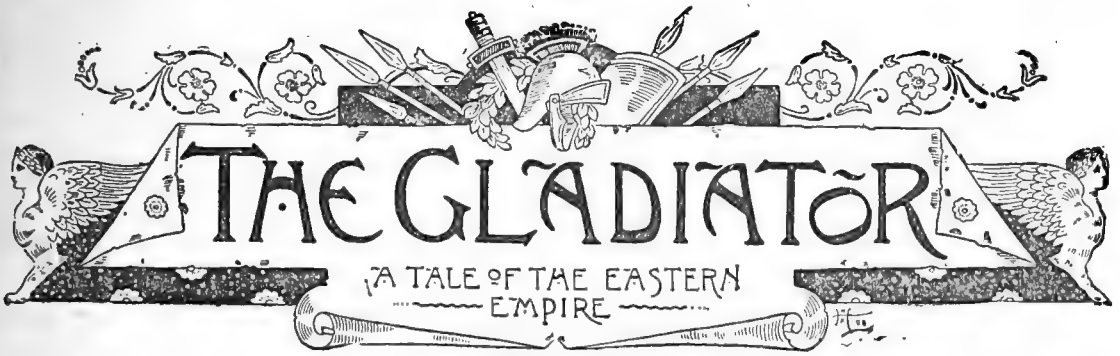

By GEORGE C. WALLIS.

SUMMARY.

THE opposing factions in the public games of ancient Constantinople were known as the "Blues and Greens." The Emperor and Empress favoured the Blues, and consequently the enmity that existed between the two factions was so strong that they could not meet in the streets without coming to blows.

Rhesus, a country youth from Sicily, lands at Constantinople with his friend, Proclus, and with a fixed determination to become famous as a gladiator. He adopts the cause of the Greens, and the first contest in which he takes part is a chariot race, which he would have won had it not been for the foul play of Hermiot, his opponent of the Blues.

Rhesus falls in love with Eutasia, a pretty little waif of the circus, of twelve years, who speedily becomes warmly attached to him.

A few years pass and Eutasia is affianced to Rhesus.

One night Proclus and Rhesus chance to overhear a plot between Hypatius, a claimant to the throne, Marcen, a gladiator of the green faction, and Hermiot of the Blues, to raise the city in revolt, remove Justinian from the throne, and make Hypatius emperor in his place.

Hypatius proceeds to take them singly down to the flooded catacombs under the ground upon which they are standing, where he has vast treasures stored with which he purposes to buy the sympathies of the people. Marcen goes with him first, leaving Hermiot on the watch. Rhesus and Proclus spring out upon Hermiot, bind and gag him. Upon the return of Hypatius and Marcen, Proclus assumes the blue sash of Hermiot, personates Hermiot under the cover of the darkness, and goes down into the catacombs with Hypatius in order to discover the whereabouts of the treasure.

Meanwhile it occurs to Marcen that if he were to cut off the only means of egress from the catacombs, his fellow conspirators will be heard of no more, and he will be the sole possessor of the hidden treasure. He returns to the entrance of the catacombs, followed by Rhesus, who watches him carry out his murderous designs. Marcen discovers the presence of Rhesus and rushes at him. Rhesus eludes him, and a hot chase follows. Rhesus finally gives Marcen the slip, and, together with Pelak, a charioteer of the Greens, returns to the catacombs in order to release his friend Proclus. Upon arriving there, however, they find someone has been before them, and the place is empty.

Rhesus returns home, and is overjoyed to find Proclus awaiting him there. Proclus tells him how that Marcen himself released the prisoners from the catacombs, and how that whilst imprisoned there he, Proclus, had discovered an inscription revealing the hiding-place of the key of a secret door.

Marcen persuades the Empress to take Eutasia into her service, and thus to remove her from the influence of Rhesus. Rhesus hears of it too late to prevent her going to the palace. He pays a clandestine visit to Eutasia in the palace grounds in order to persuade her to fly with him. He is discovered by some spies in the pay of Marcen, and barely escapes with his life.

Another great chariot race takes place. The palm of victory is unjustly awarded to the Blues, and the Greens break out in open rebellion. General dissatisfaction is felt against the Emperor Justinian, and Hypatius seizes the opportunity to urge his claims to the throne. He wins the populace over to his side, and fearful riot and slaughter ensues.

Rhesus and Proclus seek refuge in the flooded Catacombs, pursued by Marcen and a band of Hypatius' followers. After a fierce struggle, Proclus is wounded and thrown into the water for dead, and Rhesus is taken prisoner.

PART II.

CHAPTER V.

THE CLAWS OF THE TIGRESS.

THE feline ferocity that fights the more fiercely when driven to bay and bereft of all semblance of hope, is ever the most dangerous sort of valour to arouse. And the Empress Theodora, now her favourite faction had been led astray, and the hated Greens were in the ascendant, and herself and her husband kept close prisoners in the palace by the virulence of the passion-storm that raged in the riotous city, was possessed of just that kind of animal courage.

In vain had the ministers and generals endeavoured to restore or enforce order; in vain had Justinian—whose lordly mandate but a few years before had put down the Platonist schools of Athens and so extinguished the last faint star of Pagan philosophy that had twinkled in the deepening dusk of superstition—striven to allay the bloodthirsty fever of the drunken mobs of his Christian capital; in vain had Theodora's wild appeals and reckless promises been squandered; in vain the questor and prefect deposed and the taxes reduced to put an end to the reign of terror; and now, when the palace itself was surrounded by frantic partisans of Hypatius, and their very lives were in hourly, deadly peril, and ships lay ready laden at the foot of the garden stairs, and all counselled safety in flight, even the studious Justinian himself, the true temper of the Empress flashed out, and she declared with magnificent scorn, that come what might, she would not flee before a howling mob of ignorant slaves and commoners.

The courtiers implored her, reasoned with her, and Belisarius urged the necessity of caution before bravado; but the imperial tigress, all her cunning and cruelty flaming up in one splendid burst of fury, vowed that not only would she refuse to escape, but that the rebels should be brought to their knees and punished so severely that her revenge would be remembered through the ages.

Visions of a holocaust of victims floated—with cruel clearness—before her mental gaze, and, awed by her impetuous invective and really admirable bravery, the Emperor and those around him gave way and became instruments and accomplices in the realising of those horrific visions. And of all those who listened to her finely-pointed satire on men's faintheartedness, none thought her more queenly than did surface-skimming Eutasia; none felt so satisfied that he had chosen the wiser and safer course in staying in the palace instead of joining the rebels, than did Marcen. He fell in at once with Theodora's plans and prepared to carry out his share of the work with more than his customary zest.

It was his duty, with several others, to steal forth into the city unobserved and seek out individually the leaders of the blue faction, and by cajoling and promising, by reprimands and instilling envy of the triumphant Greens, to revive the partisan enmity and so divide the foe. On the evening of the fifth day he crept out and did his work well, leaving loyal Belisarius to complete the red annals of *Nika*; and then, having other and pressing business of his own in hand, summoned a gang of sturdy ruffians whom he had often employed before, and brought them off the rich harvest they were gathering in the hapless city by promises more

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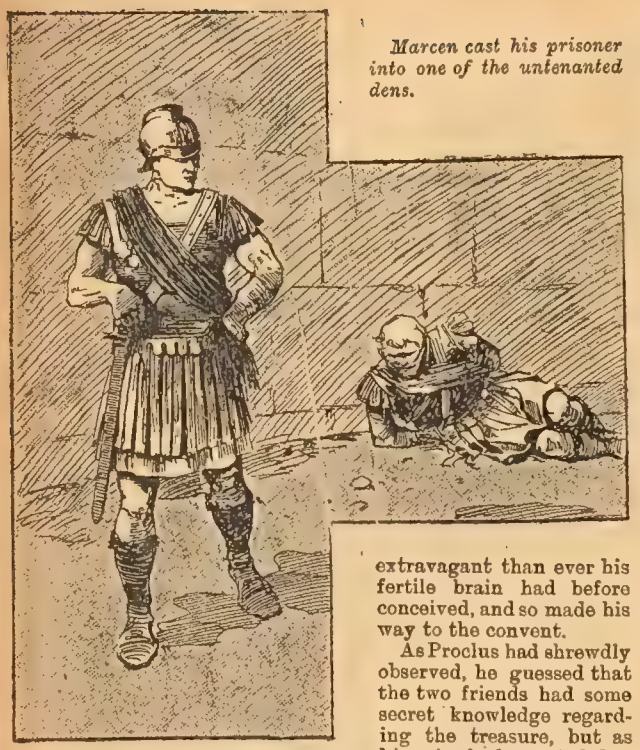

Marcen cast his prisoner into one of the untenanted dens.

extravagant than ever his fertile brain had before conceived, and so made his way to the convent.

As Proclus had shrewdly observed, he guessed that the two friends had some secret knowledge regarding the treasure, but as his spies had reported that neither of them, nor any emissaries of Hypatius, had since visited the Hall of Waters, he had been content to wait a suitable time for action. That time, he now thought, had come. But until he reached the underground chamber and actually discovered that Hypatius had not rifled the hoard, he was in an agony of dread lest the latter should have suspected his duplicity.

How he found his friends; how Proclus was cast into the inky waters of that subterranean flood and Rhesus was brought up, bound; how he was unable to find a key or clue to the secret of the sliding door of stone; and how the convent was blazing when the grumbling assassins emerged therefrom, the reader already knows. How he once more played double traitor and yet came through the ordeal with success and renown, remains to be told.

Boldly marching to the hippodrome, where the bright sunlight of the new morning was breaking throught the pall of fire-streaked smoke that hung over Byzantium, and where Hypatius had established his temporary headquarters, Marcen took his miserable prisoner and cast him into one of the untenanted bear dens. Then he mingled with the throng of flattering courtiers who already surrounded the new Emperor, and later in the day, found chance to speak with him alone.

Hypatius, flushed with success, and yet uneasy for the future, and casting about in his mind whether to attack the palace that day or the next, was at first inclined to grant scant hearing to one whose fidelity he had begun to doubt; but Marcen was so persistent, and reiterated his assurances of friendship so earnestly, that both the pretender and his brother were deceived. They listened eagerly to his account of how helpless was the Royal party, how easy their capture at any time, and how he had caught Rhesus and Proclus in the treasure vault. And whilst he talked, Marcen ever and anon glanced at the sun and at the notches on the water-clock that stood by the starting-place of the races. The wearers of blue, he noticed, were now few and far between, and even these one by one stole away. At the hour agreed upon, if all went well and Hypatius could be kept from the offensive, Belisarius would appear upon the scene and the last act of the grim drama of a foiled revolution would be played out with an unflinching adherence to the historic traditions of such stupendous tragedies.

"Yes, the treasure is ours now, beyond doubt," he said, "and if you need one more thing before you venture to make an end of Justinian it is that. The twentieth part of that hoard, scattered broadcast amongst the armed ruffians who are yet indifferent to either side, would win them to yours, and your position would be assured. Why not come with me—one or both of you—with a picked band of trusty men—if you have any—and secure and bring it away?"

Pompey was of hotter blood and for immediate action, but the glitter of gold and jewels was in the mind's eye of Hypatius, and he hesitated. And if ever a man who wavered was lost, the upstart Emperor of the green faction was lost in that moment of indecision. Life, wealth, power, the throne of an empire, lay in the balance against passing greed; the scale of greed weighed down and all was lost.

Even whilst they talked a commotion had arisen in the circus, and ere Hypatius had decided, some of his officers burst into his presence with the news that many of the blue faction were deserting them and that the foreign soldiers were massing in the neighbourhood of the palace and returning to something of their old discipline. The water in the clock sank slowly towards the level that Marcen's eyes rested on, and he cried, when the officers had finished their disquieting intelligence:

"All the more need, Majesty, for the wealth under the convent yonder, to turn the last pulse of the tide in your favour!"

The irresolute man fell into the trap set for him by a cunning hand, and sending out orders that the attack was to be deferred until his return, committed himself and a choice troop to the guidance of Marcen. Pompey was left behind, protesting.

The journey was shorter than even the most hasty fortune-seeker could have wished; indeed, it was ended before it was well begun. As the troop passed through a frequented doorway into the street, a sea of blue-clad figures surged up close round them, swallowing them as the rising flood of a swollen river submerges the rushes on its brink. After a brief, sharp struggle, Hypatius found himself bound hand and foot, carried to the dark den where Rhesus already lay, thrown therein, and there left to his own thoughts; whilst upon his ears was borne the sound of fighting, the clash of arms, the trample of many feet, the roar of many voices, the fierce shouts of victorious soldiery. The slaughter had begun; the claws of the imperial tigress were already wetted in the blood of her victims.

As the grated door of the den closed upon the ill-fated aspirant to the crown, 3,000 veterans, seasoned in the Persian and Illyrian wars, marched into the hippodrome in two divisions, one led by Belisarius and one by Mundus; and while these fell upon the astonished and densely-packed crowd of rebels within, the wearers of the blue, armed with daggers, maces, and short spears, flocked round the building like vultures to a field of carnage, and wreaked their wild, new-born fury upon all who escaped the swords of the soldiers.

Under the leadership of Pompey and others, the doomed Greens made a desperate effort to escape from the death-trap of those circling walls, but their assailants were tireless and innumerable, thirsting for vengeance, for wrongs long remembered and feuds unforgotten, and those who were saved from that seething maelstrom of murder, were saved in the spirit only, not in the flesh.

The horror of the long days of riot, the incredible fury of the blood-fever that had seized hold of all who were in the wretched city in those awful days, and the quenchless flame of the faction enmity had culminated in a climax of crime, a saturnalia of slaughter, a night of "*Nika!*" such as

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makes the brain reel and the soul sicken to contemplate, and which the pen refuses to dwell upon in many words. Suffice it to say that no fewer than 30,000 of the rebels were slain in the hippodrome and thousands more in the streets as the circle of death spread outwards; that when the next day dawned the green faction was nearly exterminated, the city was half in ruins, Hypatius and Pompey, with Rhesus and many others, were lodged in the dungeons of the palace, Justinian sat Emperor without a rival, and Theodora's face was wreathed in smiles. But enough of these chronicles of crime; we will follow the less discreditable fortunes of Rhesus the Roman, over whose head now hangs the implacable vengeance of a woman clothed in purple and dignified in history by the title of "Great"—a woman whose tender mercies were incredibly cruel and whose heart was the heart of a beast of prey.

CHAPTER VI.

"To the Galleys!"

Order is once more restored in Constantinople, the wealthy have returned to their homes, the shipping has once more crowded the Golden Horn, and Anthenius, the architect, has been commanded to rebuild the Church of St. Sophia. The hippodrome has been closed by an imperial order, the questor and prefect reinstated in their positions, and the pretender and his co-prisoners are brought to trial—or to the mockery called such. Small justice is there in the eyes of Theodora; little equity in the impatience of Justinian—irritated even then at being called away from his self-imposed task of codifying and revising the laws of the Roman world, of compiling those *Institutes* and *Pandects* which alone have rescued his memory from the dull level of his peers.

Some of the prisoners met their judges and the foregone conclusion with a callous indifference; most of them deserved the worst; but to Rhesus, with the blood of honest youth in his veins, and an unbounded enthusiasm, and a loved one to live for and guard from the clutching arms of the worlds' sin, the agony of the impending sentence seemed greater than a man could bear. He was innocent, too, of the treason with which he was charged—though innocence was poor enough plea in that court—and his soul cried out against such an end, a traitor's end, to all his dreams of fortune and renown and years of happy love.

Surely it was more than the gods would allow, this monstrous injustice? His gaze travelled round the crowded room of audience, seeking, and for long in vain, for a single pitying face, a single glance of regret. But at last, all unexpectedly, a face framed itself out of the sea of people—a sweet and merry face with a halo of golden hair—and his heart leapt with a spasm of hope. The Empress was fond of his Eutasia, and she would intercede for him, at least get the sentence mitigated. And if life be granted at all, of a surety he would find some way to come into his own again, to recover what he had lost, to win from the grasp of the flying years some of that happiness that once he thought was his without fail.

So he plucked up some courage and looked the judges in the face. But that gleam of relief was a passing gleam only, and dark and dull as the shadow of heavy-laden storm clouds came the words of fate from the lips of the pronouncer of the sentences. To some few of the prisoners, mistakenly arrested, was granted release; many were condemned to the mines or the galleys; and with Hypatius and his brother Pompey and eighteen of their most noted partisans, Rhesus was condemned to death.

The light went out of the sunny sky for him as the dread words fell upon his ears, the warmth out of the summer air, the pleasure out of even the little span of life that yet remained. He glanced swiftly round the crowded hall, but met no friendly eyes save those he loved. The bishops and priests, clad in their gorgeous robes of ceremonial—in all the pomp and pageantry of Christian fashion—nodded their heads in acquiescence of his doom; the soldiers stared stonily; the people moved with idle interest; Justinian fidgeted in his royal seat; Theodora tossed her shapely head and jested with the nearest man who had nerve to bandy words with her; and over Marcen's face stole a grim, lurking smile of satisfaction as he stood beside Eutasia and strove to allay her frantic despair.

The guards moved forward to lead the doomed away, and as the glittering shields closed round him, he already seemed to hear the earth falling on his hasty grave. But ere the words of command had left the officer's lips a wild, piercing cry—a girl's cry—rang through the startled throng. A lithe, light form came flying across the central space and between the soldiers, and in a moment soft arms were about his neck, and Eutasia's tearful face pressed close to his, and hot words of love, regret and supplication to him

No fewer than 30,000 of the rebels were slain in the hippodrome.

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and defiance to the judges, were poured into his dazed ears.

"They shall not slay you, my Rhesus!" she cried, "they dare not, for the Empress will forbid! And oh, Rhesus my love, my dear one, forgive me now, this instant, for sending you away with anger. Say that you cherish no ill for it, love!"

He essayed to unlock her arms and look the man before the eyes of the curious crowd. He assured her that he had naught to pardon, and bade her not to risk her life in his service. It was in vain; and her fragrant caresses were showered upon him until the guards, recovered from their surprise, advanced and tore them apart. Two brawny Sythians held her, panting with passion, in their iron grasp.

"Take her away!" cried the ushers, pompous in their drunken rotundity, "the Emperor declares the trial over and the matter dismissed. Take her to the Empress and the prisoners to their fate."

But the little fury tore herself free again and broke through the ring of steel once more, calling on Theodora and Marcen to aid her; and when they were parted once again—and more roughly than before—the latter had spoken secretly with Theodora. He then came forward and led the girl away, whispering Rhesus knew not what in her pretty ear, while the doomed man raged as one possessed, and shouted aloud that Marcen was the vilest traitor in the city and false to all saving himself. He saw the two look at him as they conversed with the Empress. He saw a strange wild, agonised glance pass over his darling's face—a shade, a moment of hesitation—and then, averting her head she gave her finger-tips to the traitor and suffered him to lead her away. Yet often she looked back ere she vanished from his sight, tearful, regretful, her girlhood changed to womanhood in that one indescribable gaze.

And Rhesus, seeing the Empress bend and speak to the judge, could but guess how she had sacrificed herself for his sake, had surrendered to Marcen to save his life—worthless to him now, at such a cost. The knell of the reprieve rang through the room; and Rhesus the Roman was sentenced to serve with bare back and manacled feet amongst the vilest criminals who pulled the oars of the galleys.

Two brawny Sythians held her, panting with passion, in their iron grasp.

And as they led him straightway with the rest of the doomed down to the busy wharf, and apportioned them amongst the many ships that lay there ready for sea, and riveted the heavy chains upon his ankles and stripped the green sash and tunic from his back and chained him to an oar in the hold of a grey-painted transport ship, he made a vow by all the gods of his dear pagan heaven. He vowed that come what might, captive or free, when next he cast eyes on Marcen—the consummate villain and traitor whose cunning had stolen his love and slain his friend, and kept his own wretched carcase whole through all the riot and ruin that had brought so many better men to violent ends—he would pay the heavy reckoning in full.

"The gods may spare you, the suspicion of courts and the frenzy of popular rage may pass you by, but *I* will not, Titan of iniquity!" cried Rhesus, in the bitterness of his soul.

And that night of black despair, when the anchor was raised and the vessel began her voyage with a breeze that dispensed with the services of the fifty rowers, there rang in his hearing, high above the oaths and maledictions of his wretched companions in toil as they took such ease as came to them, the passionate cry of Eutasia's entreaty for his life; and before his mental view, in the glare of the silver moonlight that poured in a dazzling ray through the small square of the rowlock-hole and cast dense shadows where the rats squeaked and ran, there floated the last glimpse he had of his love, led away by a traitor's hand.

Awhile the mocking vision floated there before him, until his eyes grew strained, and burned as orbs of fire, and it merged to a mist of blood. Then weariness overcame him. He fell in a heap upon his chains, and slept.

(*To be continued.*)

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MY SHADY VISITOR.

I AM not an imaginative man, let it be known at the outset; I am not a man at all likely to be the prey of hallucinations. I do not tremble at a shadow, nor am I one of those poor spectre-smitten imbeciles who turn a branch into a warning finger.

Strictly speaking, there is nothing horrible about my experience. At the same time, as I write it down, I am conscious of a tingling of the nerves and a tendency to look over my shoulder.

The situation is this: An unimaginative man of thirty, whose time is largely occupied by an untaxing business; a pleasant suburb, the big houses of which were supplied with electric light; a bright, sunshiny country; neighbours on all sides; and no predisposition whatever about the man, the place, or the neighbourhood, to ghosts. To this house and to this man the ghost came. And in this wise:

It was towards the close of summer when the days begin to close in early.

I was sitting, after dinner, trying to get sentimental over my approaching happiness—I was soon to be married—and picturing to myself Venus in the easy chair opposite me. It was a feeble attempt at experiencing the pleasures of imagination, because I could not picture anyone at all.

Then I took a book and opened it, with a yawn. The light was fading, but as my eyes followed the lines mechanically, and my thoughts were elsewhere, that mattered little. Outside, there was extraordinary stillness.

A curious feeling came over me; I suddenly realised the fact that life may go on in invisible, intangible forms. I looked about with a shudder; I expected something—what, I knew not.

All at once the room, without the slightest warning, became distinctly darker. Suddenly the outer door opened with a terrific bang, as if some strong wind had forced it open, instantly causing me to jump from my chair.

Up to this moment, remember, there was no reason whatever for alarm; yet I became unaccountably afraid. The darkness was intense. I struck a match; it went out. I struck another; that also went out. Then I hastily turned on the incandescent light. The glow, instead of being the usual white, was of a peculiar bluish tint.

The door was still open. The air grew chilly. I felt cold perspiration upon my forehead. I tried to close the door, but something held it fast, though the air outside was perfectly still. All at once the door slipped out of my hand and slammed back to its place with a louder noise than that which it made at its opening.

I was frightened. It was all exceedingly uncanny, and I felt nervous. I then happened to look in the direction of my chair. It was fully five feet from where I had left it but a moment before!

Then the incandescent light, still of a bluish tint, began moving, apparently of itself, toward the chair, and in an instant, for the first time, I saw—IT quietly sitting in the chair holding in its bony hands the electric light bulb, still glowing, with the most horrible grin on its face.

It was clearly outlined, a peculiar shadow, in the dusk of the evening; colourless, and yet its draperies were like white grave clothes; shapeless, and yet a form akin to human, but most awfully unlike it. It seemed the gaunt spirit of a skeleton, whose intangible fingers of wavering bones plucked at a wisp of spectral hair that drooped from a ghastly, eyeless skull—which, though eyeless, seemed none the less to behold me!

For a moment I was paralysed with fear, but, as the apparition evinced no signs of evil intention, I gathered courage to gasp:

"Who are you, and what do you want?"

He answered by throwing the electric light bulb at me, which whizzed past my ear, and with a pistol-like report broke into a thousand pieces at the other end of the room.

Though we were in absolute darkness, yet, by his now phosphorescent eye sockets, the THING was easily discernible, and simultaneously with the crash of the bulb he burst out in awful, diabolical laughter which lasted for some seconds. Quickly, with that singular movement remarked by all who have had the special privilege, if it be that, to witness such things—a movement in which the shape neither glides nor walks, but merely changes place—the spectre stood chuckling beside me.

"How do you like my fun?" said he, grinning more horribly than before. "Oh, you needn't try to get away"—grasping me by the arm (oh, his touch!) as I hastily stepped back. "I have found you at last, you cannot escape this time! But now that I have found you, what shall I do with you?"

I could only look hopeless.

Suddenly he stretched out one arm and I saw a bony

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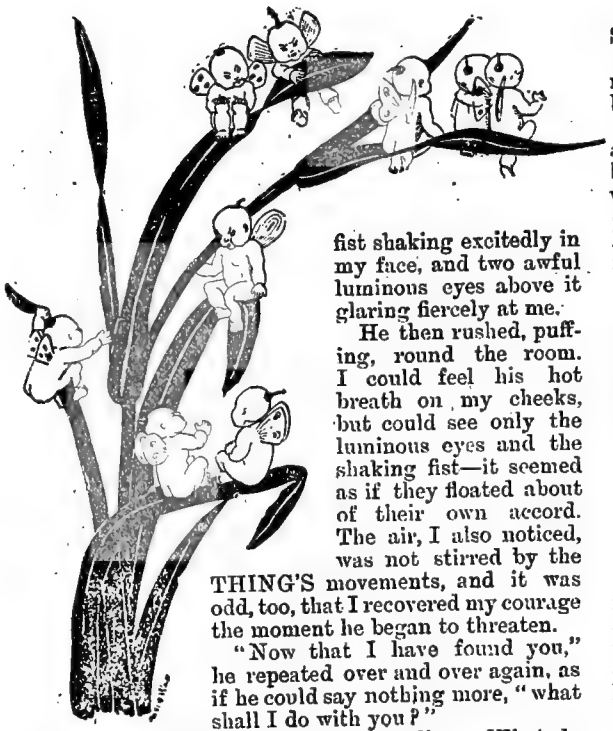

fist shaking excitedly in my face, and two awful luminous eyes above it glaring fiercely at me.

He then rushed, puffing, round the room. I could feel his hot breath on my cheeks, but could see only the luminous eyes and the shaking fist—it seemed as if they floated about of their own accord. The air, I also noticed, was not stirred by the THING'S movements, and it was odd, too, that I recovered my courage the moment he began to threaten.

"Now that I have found you," he repeated over and over again, as if he could say nothing more, "what shall I do with you?"

"Come," I cried at last, "this is fooling. What do you mean by coming to my house like a burglar and carrying on like a madman? Leave off asking what you will do with me. If you are a ghost out of his senses, say so; if not, vary the monotony by saying something else."

"I can't," he answered, groaning. "It's not allowed. I wish I could. Oh, what shall I do with you?"

"You've asked me that a hundred times already. But I say, you may be able to stand this darkness, but I can't."

I struck a match; he did not blow it out, as I presume he did the others. I tried another bulb on the electric light socket, but the current was off. Let me state here that I learnt afterwards that at the central station, some distance away, a strange shock was felt about the time of the arrival of my ghost, half indicating that I was not subject to some hallucination.

Not to be in darkness, I lighted an oil lamp. The THING was still there—a faint, almost invisible shape now.

"You say," I resumed, carelessly drawing a sword from its case hanging on the wall, "that you are restricted in your movements. Well, look here."

I quickly passed the sword through him. I cut him down like a guardsman at Waterloo. I sliced him in two like a soldier at an assault-at-arms. And at each pass of the weapon he ducked, recoiled, and cried aloud.

"See, you cannot resist. I do what I like with you. What can you do in return?"

He struck me in the face. It was as if a cold wind blew upon my cheeks.

"Is that all!" I said. "Do that as often as you like."

"You are not afraid of me, then?"—as if such a thing as a man daring to stand up to a ghost was unheard of.

"Positively not afraid of me?"

"Certainly not; why should I be?"

"Not afraid of me! Man! I am from the grave. See my grave clothes. I am the spirit of a dead man."

I could not repress a shudder; the shiver came across me. He saw it at once, and sprang at my throat, blowing the light out as he did so.

To my surprise, what was before as a breath of cold air became tangible. I felt his cold grasp with his long, bony fingers at my throat. His face, close to mine, was filled with an eager longing for revenge; his lurid eyes glared in mine; his teeth glimmered in the moonlight coming in through the window. It was but for a moment that I was afraid.

I rallied my courage, sprang upright, and looked my spectral enemy unswervingly in the face. As I looked, the tangibility of his fingers weakened, the tightness of his grasp relaxed, and his look changed from one of triumph to that of baffled rage. He fell back sullenly, and threw himself, clearly outlined in the moonlight, into my easy chair, glaring round the room.

"That's mine," I said. "Please take another. I never allow anyone but myself to occupy it."

He immediately obeyed.

"Will this do?"

It was next to mine. I begged him to take one on the other side of the room, which he did at once.

Just then Sarah, my general servant, entered the room, but hardly had she stepped in when she ran away shrieking as I had never heard a woman shriek before, while as for my dog, which came into the room, he ran out with his tail between his legs, and I've never seen him since. They must have seen the ghost.

"Pray tell me what it means," I said, after a momentary silence.

"It means that if you were afraid of me I would throttle you like a dog. It means that I am waiting for the moment when you will realise who and what I am; the injuries you have done me, the wickedness of your life. Ha! ha! I see it coming! Your nerves won't stand me much longer, then I shall seize you by the throat, and squeeze, squeeze, squeeze the life out of you!"

But I was not at all afraid now.

"By the way," I said, "where do you come from—our cemetery?"

"No; you know where. Need I tell you from West Australia?"

"You have come a long way, my friend," I answered, smiling.

"Ah, villain! traitor! murderer!"

"Those are hard names, my friend."

"When," he said at length, "I was in Australia region hunting for gold—there, what's the use of raking up the old story?"

"None," I answered, thinking that he certainly must be a lunatic ghost, and making a mental note of the fact as one likely to throw great light on the spirit world. "None at all, unless you like."

"To think that you—you, of all men in the world—never mind!"

"Certainly not."

"When I saw you last, over there, you were with her."

I smiled.

"No use talking. What's the good of talk? Come to think, I might remind you what went on, you know, at the 'diggings.' Eh? What do you say to that?"

"Nothing whatever."

"What about the Dyer business? Who promised what—tell me that—if some one was robbed of his three

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years' labour, and he was put out of the way because of that and her? Eh?"

Here was a very serious question. I only shook my head.

"Robbed, murdered, you villain! out of jealousy! Why was my drink poisoned? Why was my food poisoned? Why? why? why?"

"Can't say, I'm sure. Shall we say good-night?"

"If you're going to bed, I will go with you. But it isn't bed-time yet."

This was pleasant.

"What had I done to him? How was I to get rid of this lunatic ghost? Why should I be made the victim of a ghost? And I expected Venus every minute!"

She came. But she had not been with me two minutes before she saw IT, and fainted.

"What was it, John?" she asked when she came to. "What was it? I am afraid. Take me home."

I took Venus home. I implored her to keep silent as to what she had seen. I soothed, I pacified her. I assured her that it was fancy—a trick of the imagination—some schoolboy joke—anything to keep her quiet. And thus I left her, and returned, miserable and maddened, to have it out with this demon who had fastened himself upon me.

"I allowed you to go away with the girl," he explained on my return, "because I do not wish to do her any harm. But she shall never marry you, remember that. Wretch!"—he approached me with threatening gestures—"wretch! Was it not enough to interfere between me and her? You try to murder the happiness of another innocent girl! Can you ruthlessly ——"

"Good heavens!" I cried, almost beside myself with rage. "What have I done to you, that you should persecute me in this way?"

"He asks me what he has done! Think of Australia! Think of Logan's gold claim, and think of Maggie Baker. Joe Wiggins, you were always as brazen a liar as ever stepped; but I did not think you would brazen it out to me."

A thought struck me. "You call me Joe Wiggins. I am not Joe Wiggins at all. I have never heard of any Joe Wiggins."

He laughed.

"If you are not Joe Wiggins," he said, "I'll eat my hat. I mean, of course——"

"Come, this is trifling. I say that you mistake me for someone else. What did he look like?"

"The same as you—sanctimonious look, slim as a poker, small head, large sticking-out ears, big mouth—just like yourself."

This was flattering.

"Only Joe didn't wear a beard."

"Had this Joe Wiggins any marks?"

"Yes, tattoo marks on the right arm; I did them. Why?"

I drew up my sleeve and showed him my arms, white and free from any tatoo mark at all.

He was stupefied.

"Well—I'm—no—I'm blowed! And you ain't Joe at all? What a fool you must have taken me for."

"I did."

"And me to go and let out all the little secrets. You hold your tongue, man, about that gold business."

"I never thought much of ghosts," I responded; "now I shall think still less of them."

"Go on, go on," he said; "let me have it."

"Why couldn't you ask before you came blundering into my house with your mysterious self? Why couldn't you have put the question before you began?"

"Why, indeed!" he echoed. "Look here, sir, I'm very sorry for this mistake—I am, indeed. And frightening the young lady, and all! I am an idiot of a ghost! What shall I do to square things?"

"Do? Leave me at once."

"Shall I," he said plaintively, "shall I appear to the young lady to-night after she goes to bed? I can easily do it, and then explain it all."

"Certainly not; on no account. You are not to disturb her at all, understand?"

"Well, then, I suppose I'd better go."

"Indeed you had, and have the goodness never to return."

He began to disappear; I breathed more freely. Then the shape, which had almost disappeared, started into sight again with a suddenness which brought back the horror which first seized me.

"One word, sir," spoke he. "I'm afraid I haven't come well out of this affair. Now s'pose—I only say s'pose—I can put you on to a good thing. It may be a wreck of some kind; it may be buried treasure; it may be only a pot of money; it may be coins, or it may be statues; but if I should hear of it, and was to come and tell you, it might go some way to getting into your good opinion again."

"No," I replied; "I want nothing, except an assurance that I shall never see you again."

He sighed.

"Well, sir, I feel that I can't go against your wishes; I promise. No malice, eh? When we meet again, which we may, there will be no malice, I hope."

He disappeared finally, and I have seen no more of him, but have often wondered who Joe Wiggins is, where he lives, what he has done, how he managed to offend my ghost, and what that gold-mining business was all about.

A. M. Paget.

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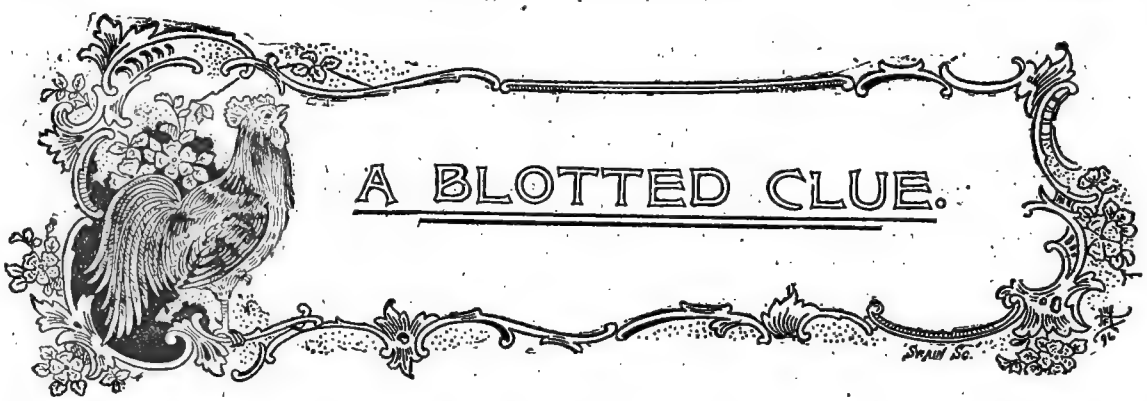

A BLOTTED CLUE.

"What I consider my most interesting case," said Detective Allison, "I took up with no apparent prospect of ever receiving one penny for my services. Now, the thought of this case and a few others in which I became interested out of pure love of justice, a desire to assist one who was being wronged, give me more satisfaction in these rheumatic days of inactivity than all else I ever did.

"What brings it to my mind now, and what often recalls it, is the gold watch you just saw me glance at. Why it does so I will proceed to tell you.

"Some twenty or more years ago the good people of Ashington, a town of twelve thousand inhabitants, were startled by the announcement that Mr. Morton Dean, a man of wealth and good social standing, although somewhat eccentric, had been murdered. He was alone in the house at the time, a sister, his housekeeper, being temporarily away,

"Startling as was this information, it was probably not so much so as the arrest of Robert Clark, also a resident at Ashington.

"I was away at the time, but the newspapers sent to me daily kept me well posted about the affair.

"A few words now about Robert Clark.

"He was twenty-five years of age. Had always lived in Ashington. Was considered an exemplary young man. While known to most of the inhabitants, he had few intimate friends, being rather reserved in his ways. His countenance indicated intelligence, but its paleness and a sad expression gave the impression that he had rather a frail constitution. This, it seems, was the case, and undoubtedly accounted for his always being on the look-out for light work.

"Some called him shiftless, but while that term could have been properly applied to his father, it did not, I believed, suit him.

"When arrested, Clark was acting as hall porter of the local Young Men's Christian Association, and bore an excellent character.

"When the news of his arrest reached me, I instinctively felt he was innocent.

"At the preliminary hearing, P.C. Anderson testified that on the night of the murder a boy told him someone at Dean's was calling for help. He hastened there and seized a man who was getting out of a window. It proved to be young Clark, who made a strenuous effort to escape, but was held and handcuffed.

"In view of the prisoner's violence, the constable had taken him to the police station, without waiting for any investigation; had then returned to the house with another officer, passed in through the window and went to the room where Mr. Dean was found dead; after certain proceedings there, returned to the police station and carefully examined the prisoner. A dozen blood-stains were found upon his clothing, and in his inside coat pocket was a pocket-book, containing fifty pounds in notes and a number of valuable documents, which plainly belonged to Mr. Dean.

"This was the substance of his testimony.

"Clark then told his story substantially as follows:

"At about twelve o'clock that night he was returning home, his duties having kept him later than usual. Strangely enough, he had never been out so late before. When in front of Mr. Dean's house he heard the cry, 'Help! help! murder!' Although of a somewhat timid nature, he admitted, he rushed to the front door, feeling it his duty to render assistance. The door proved to be ajar and a key was in the lock on the outside.

"He went in and, guided by a noise as of someone moving about, passed upstairs and opened a door. Instantly a man rushed past him, nearly knocking him down. Clark caught a glimpse of the man by the light from his dark lantern, but did not see him distinctly enough to recognise or describe him.

"I will now give the prisoner's own words as near as I can remember them, as published in a newspaper sent me at the time.

"'I then,' said he, 'struck a match and went into the room where Mr. Dean lay groaning, lighted the gas and threw some water into his face, which was covered with blood. This seemed to revive him, and opening his eyes he scanned my face and apparently recognised me. Reaching down into the bed he faintly said:

"'"Thank Heaven he did not get this," and handed me the pocket-book which was found upon me. He then said with difficulty: "My time is short; promise me you will give the pocket-book to no one but my brother Phillip, and I shall feel ready to go."

"'There was a spasm of pain, his eyes became fixed and glassy, he gave a gasp, and the end had come.

"'Then, hardly knowing what I was doing, the affair had so shocked me, I put the pocket-book into my coat pocket and entirely forgot about it (until it was discovered). Then I started to tell the neighbours and police of the tragedy.

"'On reaching the front door, to my surprise I found it locked. Then I went to a window, unfastened it, and was getting out when I was roughly seized. Thinking it was the murderer, I struggled to free myself until I found it was a policeman.'

"Clark was up before the magistrate several times and finally committed for trial.

"When I returned home, I found it the prevailing opinion that Clark was guilty.

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"My own view, that he was a victim of circumstances, was strengthened after an interview with him at the county gaol.

"I determined to do everything in my power to prove his innocence. I examined the premises where the murder was committed and interviewed everyone in any way connected with the affair.

"Not a clue did I obtain, except that a worthless fellow known as Dicey, a notorious liar whom no one in the place would believe, came to me and stoutly affirmed that he, at about eleven o'clock on the night of the murder, and in the vicinity where it occurred, met right under the gaslight at the street corner, a rough-looking stranger.

"He especially noticed a scar on his face, and could, he claimed, pick him out in a crowd.

"No one else, however, had seen him, and I felt that the information, coming from the source it did, would prove of little value.

"Well, even after the assizes had begun, a month later, all I had learnt would not have had a feather's weight with the jury.

"There was absolutely nothing in Clark's favour except his previous good character and his own statement.

"The latter of course, unsupported by any corroborative evidence, would have little weight.

"On the morning of the trial, our postmaster handed me a letter addressed to him, which read as follows:

"Postmaster, Ashington.

"Sir,—The man charged with the murder of Mr. Morton Dean is innocent. The guilty man confessed to me while under the influence of liquor. Don't dare write more for fear of my life.

"A WOMAN.

"I took the letter to my office to consider. The more I studied it the more I concluded it was of no value.

"There was apparently nothing by which the writer's identity could be discovered. Had it been from some small place, I should have had some hope, but as it bore the London postmark I had none.

"Only one thing about it was noticeable, and that, at first, seemed hardly worth a thought.

"The word 'postmaster' on the envelope was blotted. Looked as though the point of the pen had caught and spattered ink all over the word. This, however, indicated nothing, and I threw the letter on to my desk in despair, concluding that I would hand it to Clark's solicitor.

"Although I was satisfied the letter contained a true statement, I knew, if read to the jury, they would not so regard it. They would say some friend of the prisoner wrote it and got it posted.

"Picking up the letter again, I examined the blots with a magnifying glass. At the same time I was standing at a high writing-desk, on which, directly in front of me, was a small looking-glass. Lost in thought, I stood with my elbows resting on the desk. The ends of the envelope were between my thumbs and fingers, and I was unconciously twirling it round.

"Happening to glance at the mirror, to my surprise one of the blots developed into what looked like a capital letter H. On a more critical examination I was sure of it, and other letters began to show up out of the apparent ink spots until I made out the following: *Ha*; then there was a little space without any blot: then I made out the letter *r*; then came another blank space; then the letter *w*; then another space; and then the letters *ll*.

"All the letters were indistinct and imperfect.

"On that account, and the letters being wrong side up, as well as mixed with the word 'postmaster,' had failed to observe them. The mirror, however, showed them right side up, and the spots began to give out intelligence.

"My hopes brightened.

"Could that intelligence be the name of some village or town? It was; but I must relate the rest briefly.

"By the aid of a gazetteer, I soon became satisfied that 'Harrowell' was the name intermingled with the 'postmaster' on the envelope in which the anonymous letter came.

"I immediately took the train for that place, on the following theory, which proved a correct one. I concluded the letter was written in Harrowell, put into an envelope and addressed:

"Postmaster, Ashington.

"Then the same person had written and posted another letter to a friend in London inclosing therein the Ashington letter, with a request that the letter be posted in the metropolis. In folding the letter to the friend round the Ashington letter, the name of the village 'Harrowell' at the head of the sheet, covered the word 'postmaster' on the envelope. The ink not being dry made the ink spots which proved of so much importance in the case.

"On arriving at Harrowell, a very small place, I rapidly made my way to the post office, stated the case to the postmaster and showed him the letter.

"On reading it he said: 'I believe I can tell you where to find your man. We have a man in our village who has spent one term in prison. He was away at the time of the murder, but came home soon after. The letter, I believe, was written by his sister-in-law.'

"It was then three. The man, I learnt, would be home at six. That gave me time to make arrangements for his arrest and have an interview with the woman.

"On showing her the letter she admitted writing it and its truth. She had no affection, she stated, for her brother-in-law, but feared him. His actions had caused the death of her sister, and she privately confessed that she would be pleased to see him behind the prison bars.

"An examination of his room was made, and beneath the carpet, behind a chest of drawers, I found five bank notes.

"When the villain came home at six he was arrested, and we were soon speeding towards Ashington. The woman also came as a witness.

"Nothing could be done that night; it was too late. But in the morning I saw solicitor and counsel and told my story. On the opening of the court, the trial was adjourned.

"Well, I needn't prolong the story. The evidence was considered sufficient to secure Clark's acquittal, and in time the real culprit received his reward.

"Clark was very grateful to me, and with tears in his eyes expressed sorrow because he could not recompense me for what I had done.

"He soon left Ashington and I heard nothing from him until five years ago, when at Christmas I received from him this gold watch. With it was a note, saying that if some of his ventures proved successful I should hear from him again.

"I never have, but from his case I learnt to be a little shy of circumstantial evidence."

H. FITZGERALD.

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Trans-Saharan Station 15—M.

"Clink-clank! clink-clank!"

Three men crouched in the shelter of a hut made of sheets of corrugated iron. They did not stir. They scarcely breathed. The thermometer indicated a temperature of one hundred and thirty-five degrees.

Before the door of the hut rose a skeleton tower of iron beams.

Over a wheel at the top of the structure ran a wire rope which, descending perpendicularly, disappeared within a well-like cavity some twenty inches in diameter. The other end was coiled round a drum operated by an electric motor which automatically started—stopped—reversed—stopped—started, and so on. Up and down, up and down, moved the rope with monotonous regularity.

"Clink-clank! clink-clank!"

It was the only sound that disturbed the intense, suffocating stillness.

Outside, the horizon line receded to the utmost limit of vision in all directions. A level waste of sand met the eye wherever it turned, reflecting the almost vertical rays of the sun with an indescribable fierceness. The atmosphere swam in shimmering streaks.

The enormous palpitating disc of the desert was bisected by a single line of rails which dwindled to vanishing points to the north and to the south. The rails rested on the broad basis of metal like huge, inverted soup plates, which enabled the road to lie firmly upon the treacherous sand. Between the rails was placed the insulated cable which brought the electric current to the motor.

A semaphore signal, planted upright in the sand like a contorted skeleton, a few scattered tools, some bits of piping and abandoned pieces of machinery, completed the catalogue of objects of definite outline. The motor buzzed drowsily.

"Clink-clank! clink-clank!"

This particularly undesirable spot upon the world's surface was marked on the map of the new Trans-Saharan Railway as Station 15—M. The railway was the latest audacious engineering exploit of the French. It connected Algiers in a mathematically straight line with Timbuctoo, and was expected to bring the riches of the eastern Soudan to the Mediterranean shores. Station 15—M was full four hundred miles north of the southern terminus, in the hottest part of the great Sahara, just under the line of the tropic.

The three men in the hut were drilling an artesian well, that, when pierced, would create an artificial oasis. The drilling apparatus was perfectly made and almost human in its intelligence. It would work for hours without Belleau, the chief, touching a lever.

Belleau was an old man, wedded to one idea, the success of the Trans-Saharan. Littlefield, his assistant, was an Englishman, young and enthusiastic. Colet was a student of the French Technological school, who acted as helper and general utility man.

"Ah, how awfully hot this is!" muttered Colet at last, as he tried vainly to find a place where it was a degree or two cooler. "What wouldn't I give for a good swim now!"

"Keep still, there's a good fellow," expostulated Littlefield. "You are kicking up this dry sand, and it won't settle again for an age. Don't knock all our grub over, either. The Tauregs may stop the supply train, and vegetables don't grow in this country. There! you've gone and done it!"

For Colet had given another roll and dislodged a pile of boxes of provisions, which, with the miscellaneous clothing and instruments, came crashing down in a heap.

When they had been restored to their places, Belleau awoke from a troubled slumber. He glanced at his watch, and then, pulling his coat collar up to shield his neck from the solar heat, crossed the space between the hut and the tower.

"Four thousand feet," he murmured. "In forty-eight hours, we ought to reach the water-bearing strata."

By turning a lever he reversed the electric apparatus rapidly, and the drum began to wind the wire rope. When it was full, another was deftly substituted, and after that a third. Then the machinery stopped, and the heavy metal drill emerged from the black depths of the well, bringing with it a volume of dark earth, which, tumbling down a trough prepared for its reception, poured over the tawny desert sand. It was a curious contrast of hues.

The engineer fingered the soil. It was loose and friable. He smelled and even tasted it.

"We have not yet reached the belt of clay which confines the subterranean reservoirs," he said.

Once more with a humming sound, the drill vanished into the depths, the wire rope rattled furiously as it unwound, and then the apparatus resumed its work.

"Clink-clank! clink-clank!"

When the sun declined it was obscured by a curious mouse-coloured cloud rising from the west.

"Can it be a thunderstorm?" asked Littlefield.

"Worse," answered the chief; "it is a sandstorm, the terrible simoon. I fear we are in great danger."

With incredible swiftness the "Devil of the Sahara" advanced. Where the three men stood, a deathlike stillness prevailed. The outlines of the tower seemed drawn in sepia on a background of fiery orange. Long, snaky fingers of smoke came reaching out over the sky, wriggling fantastically.

Then a wall of grey mist came sweeping over the desert, and the awe-stricken beholders saw the sand caught up in vast whirling columns. A dull booming sound, like that of breakers on hidden reefs, smote upon their ears.

"Inside and close the door!" shouted Belleau.

The engineers hastened into the hut and secured the door.

In a moment, it seemed, the storm was upon them.

The atmosphere became black as midnight. A sonorous hum, like the diapason of some mighty

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cathedral organ, filled all the dome of the heavens. There were sounds of titanic buffetings and demoniac yells.

It was as if all the ancient fiends of the Sahara had gathered to overwhelm its presumptuous invaders.

Had not the hut been strongly bolted together it would have been torn to pieces. The fiery particles hissed against its iron sides like a discharge of shot.

Sand sifted through the cracks until the three men, their heads wrapped in cloths, were almost stifled.

For a moment it seemed as though they were to be buried deep in a living grave. Then, as quickly as it came, the simoon fled away, and the sun, now red as blood, threw his level beams across the plain.

The drilling apparatus was not injured. Its delicate machinery was so protected that the sand could not reach it.

Then a terrible discovery was made. Colet, his throat burning with thirst, approached the tank which contained their supply of water. He found the tap open and the tank empty!

The lad gave a cry. His companions rushed to the spot.

"All gone—wasted!" he moaned.

It was true. Not a drop remained. When the pile of supplies had fallen over, the tap had been knocked open, and the thirsty sand had drunk the precious liquid.

"If a train doesn't get here to-morrow, we shall be in a fix," observed the assistant engineer.

Belleau shook his head.

"The sand-storm has blocked the rails," he said. "No engine can pass until the ploughs have made a path for it. That will take many hours, and a man cannot live many hours in the Sahara without water."

"Let us walk to the next station," suggested Colet.

"It is two hundred miles. If one of us tried he would perish before he had accomplished a quarter of the distance," replied the old chief. His eyes turned toward the drill.

"There is one hope, then," cried the Englishman, following the direction of his gaze. "If the drill reaches the water-bearing levels in time we shall be saved."

The old engineer bowed his head silently.

"Clink-clank! clink-clank!"

The long night had dragged away and the garish sun shot into view once more. The three men, haggard, gasping, with parched throats, avoided meeting one another's gaze. The drill had gnawed its way deeper into the bowels of the earth, but there were no signs of water.

The frightful agonies of prolonged thirst had set in. The victims neglected to note the passage of time, but lay in a sort of stupor. At intervals the chief tested the borings.

"It will soon be over, one way or the other," he whispered to his assistant.

Towards the middle of the afternoon Colet collapsed with all the symptoms of violent sunstroke. His face became almost black. His pulses beat furiously.

"Water!" he muttered, with cracked lips.

His companions turned away. Then followed delirium. He murmured of running streams and splashing fountains. Death comes quickly when the thermometer marks one hundred and thirty-five degrees on the Sahara. The poor lad suddenly sprang to his feet, and, staggering from the hut, he put his palms together above his head and dived, as one dives from a river bank, headlong into the black shadow of the tower, streaming across the sand. When Littlefield reached him he was dead.

The sun completed its circuit and sank like a plummet towards the western horizon. Belleau and his assistant feebly tried the boring again. The drill was withdrawn with some difficulty. When it came to the surface it was coated with stiff clay, cool to the touch. The old engineer pointed to it. He could not speak. It was a question of a few hours now.

Belleau, completely exhausted, threw himself down on the sand at the door of the hut and seemed to sleep.

Littlefield, lying flat on his back, tried to gaze through the grey depths of the zenith. Suddenly, far above, he perceived a black spot that hovered and circled in a wide orbit. It seemed to be watching intently. A sickness of utter horror and despair came upon the young man.

He approached his chief and touched the shoulder of the still form. There was no response.

"Belleau!" he exclaimed with hoarse emphasis.

No answer. He passed his hand over the temple fringed with grey locks. The flesh was still and harsh. The heart had ceased to beat. The old engineer had passed away as peacefully as a baby goes to sleep within its mother's circling arms.

The drill never stopped.

"Clink-clank! Clink-clank!"

When Littlefield opened his eyes again the lids seemed to grate heavily upon the balls. He looked up. The grey sky was gone and the odious black spot with it. It was night, and over the velvet depths of space the tropic stars were passing in a majestic procession. They shone with wonderful brilliancy.

The young engineer gazed drowsily at them. He felt strangely comfortable as he lay there upon the sand. The tormenting thirst had ceased. He did not even feel surprised when he found that his limbs had lost the power of motion. Life seemed concentrated in a small area of the brain just behind the eyes. He perceived nothing but the glorious wheeling stars, some red, some blue, some of a yellow lustre.

Then came visions of a far distant landscape; great elm trees over-arching, and the continual gurgle of the brook, flowing underneath a plank bridge. He was walking up the path.

A girl stood at the gate and stretched out her hands to him, smiling angelically with brown eyes that looked clearly into his own.

"Harry," she said, and her voice sounded like a far away tinkle of silver bells, "you have come at last."

Then the light went out like a glowing coal, and only the great calm, desert stars, looked down pityingly.

"Clink-clank! Clink-clank!"

But when the day came again the great drill had ceased its clanking.

In those hours of darkness the waters under the earth, liberated from their prison, had burst with impetuous force through the vent, tossed the machine aside, and the first rays of the sun were reflected on the ebullient flood that bubbled up from the well, gushed in rainbow spray round the iron post of the tall derrick, filled the hollows behind the track with crystal pools, and then hastened by the three dark, silent forms that heeded it not, before plunging once more into the sands that gave it birth.

FRED. THORNTON.

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The Woman Who Jilted a Man.

The news of the young man's death affected Miss Darrow disagreeably. The close friendship existing between the two families would call for some display of concern on her part, if only for form's sake. Being a girl of strong convictions and unalterable opinion, she regretted this necessity. She considered it incompatible with true honesty to simulate grief for a person she could not respect.

Moreover, there was the Captain. Women can be very rigid in their censorship of the conduct of a lover to whom they have grown indifferent. When to that indifference is added the power of the spell wielded by the Other Man, this rigidity is intensified. The Captain was tall, bronzed, athletic, handsome—all, in fact, that the late Arthur Herrick had not been. Miss Darrow had found him strangely fascinating. Now that young Herrick was dead she felt saddened, perplexed. Remorseful also? Possibly.

Nowhere in all this world is the sky so blue as at Dharjeeling. It is a pale, turquoise blue—a burnt-out blue, for the sun is fierce enough there to burn red-hot iron white. Miss Darrow's eyes were strong, as well as very large and very black, and the brilliant blue of the sky this morning failed to cause her so much as a blink. She was sitting in the indifferent shade of a scraggly tree in the gorgeous garden of the most gorgeous hotel in the land. She was dressed in white, and was good to look at. All girls with royal black eyes who dress in white are beautiful, at least in northern India.

It was the hour for morning parade, and the hotel piazzas were free of military gentlemen with glove-fitting uniforms and glittering swords. There were women up there, plenty of them—some quite as beautiful as she—but in these Miss Darrow was not in the least interested.

High overhead a great buzzard balanced himself, motionless, except for the occasional jerky tilting of his wings. Near by a fountain plashed monotonously—drip, drip, drip.

It was in these very gardens, then flooded, most romantically and most beautifully, with moonlight, that Miss Darrow had last seen Arthur Herrick, to whom she had been engaged for three years.

There had been a dance at the hotel—your army-loving girl will dance at any hour and in any temperature, however hideous—and Miss Darrow even now could remember the white imperial silver of the moon flooding the palm trees, and the wailing of the violins from within, as she walked in these gardens with the *fiancé* she had decided should never be her husband. The laughter of young newly-arrived officers, feverish with the rapture of their first campaign could be heard from the piazzas as the little life tragedy was played, out here on the grass beside the fretfully-splashing fountain. The conversation was not difficult to remember; every phrase was simplicity itself.

"Your decision is quite irrevocable."

"Quite."

"You have decided you will not marry me. It would at least be courteous in you to tell me why."

"It is a woman's privilege to change her mind. I choose to exercise it."

"I have been very faithful to you—Elizabeth."

"Yes." The insolence of the monosyllable was merciless and infinite.

"I have the right to demand a better reason."

"I have a better reason."

"And it is——"

"All the men I know are brave. They are thinking of sterner things than marriage. They have entered the army. You have not. Arthur, I will not marry a coward."

She had watched him walk away proudly, and in silence. The moonlight accentuated the pallor of his face, but his civilian's evening dress became him. She had had no chance to regret her severity, for the next dance was Captain Hough's, and his footsteps fell heavily on the walk as he came to claim it.

And now the young man was dead. If her conduct had occasioned him suffering, it was ended now—and she was tolerably sure that he had suffered—else his lips would hardly have grown so white. Still, she did not regret, even now. She was a soldier's grand-daughter, and her conscience told her that she had done rightly. She rather harboured toward the young man a certain feeling of resentment. He had chosen an inopportune time to die.

She reclined in the garden chair with her eyes half shut, her attitude one of utter grace. Above, the buzzard still circled and sailed in the heat-waves, and near by the fountain went drip, drip, drip.

Captain Clayton Hough was coming slowly up the walk. The Captain's regular army training was evidenced by his masterful tread, the superb rigidity of his figure and the piercing glance of his eye. It was a bright blue eye, kindly and gentle in expression ordinarily, but capable of emitting sparks in a fight. As it rested on Miss Darrow, the kindness was unmistakable.

From beneath drooping and delicately-veined lids, the young lady in white watched him approach. She had only known the Captain since the arrival of his regiment two weeks before, but as he came near, her full lips parted slightly, and the bodice of the white dress rose and fell. Had it lain within the power of the late Arthur Herrick to awaken such manifestations, the condemnation of his cowardice might have been less harshly expressed.

The Captain was as shy as he was big. Red as his face was with the exertion of drill and with the heat, it reddened still more fiercely as he diffidently saluted the white figure and subsided into a very uncomfortable three-cornered rustic seat, opposite. Miss Darrow smiled upon him with exceeding sweetness, as she remarked placidly: "Another boiling day, Captain."

"Yes," acquiesced the Captain, stabbing at the grass with his sheathed sword. He was studying the artistic little tendrils of brown hair at the base of the lady's neck, and wondering how any human being could look so exasperatingly cool on such a day.

"It is a shame," she averred sympathetically, "to make you parade on such a day."

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"It will be hotter," said the Captain simply, "in Poongar."

Miss Darrow shot an oblique glance at the soldier from beneath the veiled lids. The softness of his voice indicated the gentleman—the flashing of his eye, the soldier. The very ideal, this, of a man.

So regarding him, Miss Elizabeth Darrow knew why she had been merciless to Arthur Herrick.

On the lawns officers in mufti and women in light frocks were beginning to move about languidly. The prospect of an interruption to their *tête-à-tête* did not suit Miss Darrow. The Captain's eye had flashed adoration as well as patriotism as it had rested upon her. She had realised vaguely in the last twenty-four hours that she was approaching the passion of her life. The cowardice of her *fiancé* had afforded her excuse for giving it rein. The experience of the last three minutes had convinced her of the sweetness of its possible reward. And the orders to leave for the front might come at any hour!

The Captain was still stabbing at the turf with his scabbard. "I feel wretchedly blue," he confessed suddenly.

"Oh," cooed the lady, wreathing the back of her head with a perfect forearm, "why, I wonder?"

"I was with that young chap Herrick last night, when he died. He and I were together at Winchester. You knew him, did you not?"

Miss Darrow turned a shade whiter. "Er—slightly," she murmured. He did not know, then. She felt immeasurably relieved.

"I don't know when I've been so broken up," went on the soldier, rather shamefacedly, "he was half delirious, you know, but rational enough at times to make out a pretty clear story. And it's the saddest I ever listened to."

"Tell me about it," urged the young woman bravely. She wished to learn how much he knew. Was it possible Arthur had betrayed her?

"There wasn't much of it," admitted the Captain clumsily. "He'd been engaged for three years, it appears, to a girl he loved very dearly. He worshipped her, he idolised her—you ought to have heard the poor chap rave! And he would not tell her of his condition because he feared it would cause her suffering."

"Of his condition," echoed Miss Darrow faintly, "what condition?"

"He'd been suffering for a year with the complaint that carried him off—some sort of heart trouble, you know—and the doctors gave him hope that he would get over it. Then it seems the girl threw him over, squarely and flatly, because he didn't enter the army. She taxed him to his face with cowardice. That broke his heart."

The listener's face was very pale, indeed, now. "Go on," she requested, with praiseworthy calmness.

"And the pathetic part of it is," concluded the Captain, with a final, vindictive stab at the turf, "that the boy was as brave as a lion in spirit, though physically as weak as a cat. He had applied for enlistment in eight regiments, and had been rejected by the examining surgeons in every case. The last words he said to me were: 'I was afraid to tell her the truth, Hough. I didn't want her to know what a wreck I was. But I should die happier if I thought some day she'd know I wasn't a coward.'"

As he finished his recital, the Captain arose and shook himself like a large dog. He had never looked handsomer or more desirable in his life.

Miss Darrow stood up and faced him timidly. "It is very sad," she said softly. "What do you think of it all, Captain Hough?"

The Captain bowed gallantly and answered with great gentleness: "I am so nearly in love myself that my sympathies are all with the young man. If I had that girl before me I think I should be tempted to wring her beautiful neck."

The soldier had lost his diffidence, and was staring boldly into his companion's velvety eyes.

Miss Darrow was both courageous and impulsive. There came upon her now the impulse to be honest. Perhaps it was the plucky gambler's impulse—added to the knowledge that discovery, in any event, must come sooner or later—that prompted her now to declare calmly:

"Captain Hough, I was the girl."

The Captain drew back a pace and paled a trifle through his bronze. He looked first incredulous, then indignant. Watching his expression, the lady felt her hopes slowly congealing in her breast. As they stood there together, uncertainly, beneath the scraggly palm tree, there came suddenly from the interior of the hotel a hurricane of cheers, followed by a prodigious scampering along the piazzas, and a waving of flags from all the windows.

The Captain drew himself erect, clicked his heels together and gave a military salute.

"As I live, Miss Darrow," he said, in tones of relief, "the order has come to move to the front.'

He turned and strode up the pathway.

Miss Darrow stood beneath the scraggly palm for some time—meditating. Overhead, the great buzzard still sailed, and the fountain chanted its monotonous—drip, drip, drip.

ARCHIE BALDE.

ONE OF TWO THINGS MUST HAPPEN.

Either you do get the Double Summer Number of *Pearson's Weekly* on Friday, July 29th, or you don't. If you don't, that, we may safely say, will be your loss; if you do, you will hold in your hand the most scrumptious twopennyworth this world has ever seen.

Two of the special features are: A fifteen-thousand-words story, entitled:

"HELLVILLE, U.S.A." By George Griffith,

and a Prize Competition run on absolutely fresh lines.

The Editor has selected ten names from the London and Provincial directories all over the Kingdom, and has addressed ten envelopes to these people. In each envelope is a £5 note. On receiving an application from the ten persons, the envelopes will be stamped and posted.

It does not necessarily follow that the persons selected are readers of *Pearson's Weekly*. One of them may be yourself. Anyway, get a copy of

Pearson's Double Summer Number,

and see the conditions for addressing your post-card, as no application will be considered unless made in proper fashion.

This is the biggest prize scheme devised for a long time, and as it costs you but a halfpenny postcard, you should go in for it at once.

Pearson's Double Summer Number,

PRICE TWOPENCE.

A FORCED LOAN.

Two of the best friends that were ever on earth were Fred Bentley and Tom Stockton. They had been chums at school, the same at college, and partners in business on their first entry into the outside world.

The singular unanimity of their tastes had also prompted them to fall in love with the same girl, and, strange to say, their friendship for each other proved too strong even for the green-eyed monster, and the only quarrel which they ever had over the girl was which of them should have her, or, to put it more correctly, which should have the privilege of sacrificing his love on the altar of Friendship, and retiring in favour of his friend.

Under such circumstances it was, of course, only to be expected that a third party should step in and decide the difficulty for them by stealing away the young lady's affections while they were disputing about her.

This duly happened, and the only reproaches that passed between the two friends were based upon their mutual obstinacy in insisting each upon giving her up to the other. If this had not been the case one of them might have married her and invited the other to dinner, and so all three might have lived happily ever afterwards.

As a matter of fact, however, it was a very good thing for the young lady that she married neither of them, for, although they were both excellent fellows in their way, their business capacity was of the smallest, and the few hundreds that they started on in business as joint proprietors of a society paper rapidly melted away, and before a year was out they found themselves unable to meet their printing and paper bills, and the journal, of which such great things were hoped at its birth, died quietly and ingloriously before the first anniversary of its birthday came round.

After this they went into journalism as journeymen scribes, and in the pursuance of their avocation were brought into contact with the theatrical profession to a considerable extent. Then a maternal aunt of Stockton's died and left him a few more hundreds, which he, of course, paid into the firm's common fund, replying to his friend's protest by telling him that he would have done just the same thing, and the firm, being thus rehabilitated, proceeded to get rid of their second capital by taking a select theatrical company on tour with a play of which they were the joint authors.

It would be almost superfluous to state that this venture ended even more disastrously than the first.

They struggled along for a few months, unlike some managers who take companies on tour, paying the salaries as long as the treasury held out, and at last found themselves stranded in a provincial town in the far north, whence, after selling the properties at a ruinous sacrifice, they were just able to pay their fares back to London, and live meagrely for a few weeks while they were looking for something to turn up.

The something did not turn up. As usual in such cases, they found it a great deal easier to get out of collar than to get into it again, and at last they found themselves practically penniless, a fortnight behind in the rent of the single room that they shared, and quite naturally, on the verge of desperation.

Now, although, as I have said, they were good fellows as the world goes, and though they had started out in life with an average stock of moral principles, I regret to say that rubbing shoulders with adversity had not had that purifying effect upon them which one reads about in story-books appointed for Sunday afternoon perusal.

On the contrary. In their brief but intimate experience of the world they had seen that where money and personal convenience were concerned, the majority of men were honest only as far as the fear of the policeman obliged them to keep straight. Now that they were face to face with poverty in its most unpleasant, that is to say its genteel form, they neither of them felt that they would kick at any considerations of abstract morality to get out of such a desperately unpleasant position.

At length a crisis came. About eleven one night—the eve, in fact, of the rent-day which would see them turned into the street—they met in their room after several hours of the weary tramping about in the unsuccessful search for employment to which they had become so miserably well accustomed. Bentley was gloomy and taciturn with settled despair; Stockton was excited, restless, almost feverish, and looked as though he had something serious upon his mind.

Bentley noticed this, and said to his friend, after waiting in vain for him to speak:

"Well, old man, what's the matter? You look rather queer. You've not been drinking, I suppose, for it would hardly run to a drunk unless you've had a good deal better luck than I have."

"Luck!" said Stockton, pulling a chair up to the other side of the little table at which Bentley was

sitting. "I don't know whether you'll call it luck or something else, but you've got to know the facts, and if I can't trust you I don't suppose it's any use trusting myself."

"Look here, now," he continued, putting his elbows on the table and staring straight across into his friend's eyes, "when I started out this morning on this everlasting ghastly search for honest work that's not to be found, I went with my mind made up to end this horrible state of affairs one way or the other. I resolved either to get hold of some money, honestly if I could, but anyhow to get hold of it before twelve o'clock to-night, or else to go out of the world for good over one of the bridges.

"Well, I wandered about all day with nothing to eat, and, of course, without any success, until at last I got so hungry that I actually offered to carry a hand-bag for a middle-aged lady, apparently very much from the country, who happened to ask me the way to London Bridge Station. She looked a bit surprised when I told her point blank that I'd be glad of the job of carrying the thing, but she gave it me willingly enough, for it was fairly heavy, and she was hot and tired, and when we got to the station she gave me a shilling.

"At first I thought I'd go and get something to eat, but meanwhile this wretched tooth of mine had begun to ache furiously, and put all thoughts of eating out of my head. I'd been headachy and neuralgic all day with fatigue and want of food, and when the tooth started it drove me pretty nearly out of my mind.

"I went into a chemist's and got an ounce of laudanum and some cotton-wool. Then to a public, got threepennyworth of brandy, put twenty or thirty drops of the laudanum into it, and drank it straight off. In five minutes I was a new man; pain, hunger, and all vanished like magic. I got a pennyworth of tobacco at the bar, sat down, and enjoyed a thorough good smoke.

"It was rather a low sort of public down Southwark way, and, while I was sitting smoking and thinking, I heard a conversation going on in the next compartment which very soon convinced me that a couple of sharps had evidently got hold of a greenhorn, and were trying to work the confidence trick on him. Of course, I pricked up my ears at once, and listened all I could.

"The voice of one of the men seemed familiar to me, and I soon identified it as that of a fellow who had got six months for pocket-picking in a case which I wrote up for the *Comet*, when you and I were doing lineage before that last spec. of ours in the provinces.

"Just as the worthies were getting the greenhorn up to the scratch, I pushed the door of the compartment open, went in, accosted this fellow by name, and told him that the game was up.

"They looked ugly, and they talked ugly, but they found it convenient to clear out, and so they did, leaving me alone with Mr. Greenhorn. He was a young fellow of five-and-twenty or so, with less horse-sense than a fourth standard Board-school boy, and when I explained the swindle to him he became very grateful and very communicative. Of course he insisted on standing drinks, and wouldn't hear of my paying for any, which was convenient in the state of my finances.

"He had had a good deal to drink already, and he had a good deal more with me, and by the time I got him out of the place he was pretty well drunk. Outside he was fool enough to tell me that I'd saved him a loss of at least £50. It seems that he had just come into a small legacy, and had drawn £50 of it in gold on the lawyers' cheque. The money was in two little bank bags containing £25 each, and here they are."

As he said this, Stockton put his hand into his trousers pocket, pulled out the two bags, and let them drop on the table with a dull but musical clink.

"Good Heavens, Stockton!" exclaimed Bentley jumping up from his chair. "You don't mean to say that you robbed the man?"

"Yes, you can call it that if you like. Now don't get excited; sit down and I'll tell you how I did it, and then you can go and tell the police if you like."

"I'll not do that anyhow, old man, so go on," said Bentley mechanically sitting down again. And then Stockton continued:

"When the idiot showed me these two bags I remembered my resolve, and in them I saw rescue and, perhaps, another chance in life. The liquor that I consumed had not made me drunk, for the laudanum stopped that, but it had got away with any scruples that I might have had left, and I made up my mind to have those bags at any price. To make matters worse he took out a sovereign and insisted on my accepting it. I took it, and then suggested that we should have just one more drink and say good-night.

"I found another shady-looking public and took him in. I sat him down in a corner of the coffee-room in which there didn't happen to be anybody else, and fetched a couple of glasses of hot brandy-and-water from the bar. He was half asleep, and I managed, without him seeing me, to slip a good stiff dose of the laudanum that I had left into one of them.

"He drank it down at a gulp, and then I roused him up and got him out, and steered him up towards the river. Just as he was getting helplessly stupified I got him into a deserted by-street leading to a wharf, and half filled with carts, laid by for the night. He wanted to sit down here, and I let him; in fact, I stowed him away in one of the carts, took his two bags of gold, and left him to sleep it off at his leisure.

"That happened about an hour ago; he won't be found until the morning, and by that time I mean to be in Liverpool, that is, if you don't mean to give me up on my own confession."

"I told you before I'm not going to do that. What's done's done, and there's an end of it. You get out of the way as soon as you can, and never fear any danger from me. I daresay I should have done the same myself if I had been in your place, after all; I'm just as sick of this infernal poverty and starvation as you are."

"That's like business," replied Stockton, tossing a bag across the table. "Now, you take that, and I'll take this, and we will say good-bye till better times come."

Bentley made some show of protest; but the temptation of the gold was too strong, and he took it. Then without more ado the two friends shook hands, Stockton packed his few remaining effects into a shabby portmanteau, ran down into the street, called a cab, and drove to Euston. He just caught the midnight express, and by noon the next day he was on board a liner bound for New York.

* * * * *

Five years passed, and the two friends heard nothing of each other. Bentley found that the wheel of fortune had taken its lowest turn, for a few days later he got work on one of the dailies in place of an acquaintance who was taken ill. The man died and the post became a permanent one.

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Taught prudence at last by adversity he stuck to his work, won promotion, and found himself in possession of a decent income. As he never heard anything of Stockton he concluded that luck had not changed for the better for him, and that he had probably sunk out of sight in the undercurrents of New York life.

This, however, was by no means the case. Luck had turned for Stockton as well. On the passage out he made the acquaintance of an Australian gold-digger who was going out to try his luck in California. The two struck up a friendship, and the Australian advanced Stockton enough money to enable him to cross the continent and get a miner's outfit.

Then the two went into partnership, and after a couple of years of hard and fairly successful work they had a lucky hit and struck a rich vein that yielded them a couple of thousand apiece before it gave out.

With this capital they went to work on a more extended scale, and in three years more they sold out for £50,000 apiece and dissolved partnership, Stockton refusing all his partner's entreaties to go with him back to Australia and try his luck again there.

The fact of it was that Stockton had made up his mind to go back to England, and if possible find out the man from whom he had taken the £50 that had formed the foundation of his fortune, and secretly repay him with handsome interest, which, of course, was a sufficiently honourable resolve under the peculiar circumstances.

Arrived in England, he found himself in a very different position to that in which he was when he left. Then he had wanted money so badly that he stooped to crime to get it; now he had plenty of money and didn't know what to do with it.

His spendthrift habits had vanished during his spell of hard work, and he was a cool, hard-headed, thrifty man of business, not content with the income that his £50,000 would yield him at interest, and therefore determined to go to work with it, and double, or treble, or quadruple it as speedily as the Fates would allow him.

Of course he looked out for Bentley as soon as he got back, but he absolutely failed to find any trace of him. The reason for this was chiefly that Bentley, detesting his old name and its sombre associations, had dropped it as soon as he found himself on the road to respectability again, giving as an excuse to the few who knew him that he had come into a little property, to which was attached the condition that he should take the name of the imaginary uncle from whom he had inherited it.

After he had been casting about for a month or two for some means of employing his money, Stockton made the acquaintance of a gentleman who was running a small but fairly prosperous bucket-shop. He had experience, but wanted capital. Stockton had money and some knowledge of the mysteries of stock and share dealing, which he had picked up in America.

An examination of the business satisfied him that it was a money-making concern, and only needed a few thousands spent in profuse advertising and handsome offices to make a big concern of it; and so it came to pass that he became a partner, disguising his identity under the style of Swappem and Co.

The business flourished apace, for it was profusely advertised, and many fish came into the alluring net that was spread in the columns of the most respectable newspapers of the day.

That was the time when financial journalism was beginning to be a specific enterprise, and one day there came to the office of Swappem and Co., the advertising manager of a newly-founded paper, entitled *The Pactolian*: A Weekly Journal of Politics and Finance. After some little difficulty an advertisement order was obtained—half a page, at the very moderate price of £10 per insertion.

Before the contract had expired *The Pactolian* made a very lucky shot in financial prophesy, by which, as it happened, Swappem and Co. profited very considerably. The order was increased to a page at £30, with a laudatory article thrown in. Then came two or three more lucky shots, and the circulation of *The Pactolian* went up, to use the current phrase, "by leaps and bounds."

Instead of soliciting advertisement orders it was soon in a position to select them, and, of course, the prices went up accordingly. Swappem and Co. stood the rise for their page until it reached £100 a week, and then they kicked.

There was a dispute over the contract to begin with. Swappem and Co. claimed the space for three months, while *The Pactolian* people insisted that the order was terminable in a month. Of course there was a law-suit, and *The Pactolian* won. Swappem and Co. paid up, and the advertisement was taken out. Then one or two other firms in the same line took theirs out, and finally a new financial paper was started by a syndicate in which Swappem and Co. had a considerable interest.

After this it was war to the knife. *The Pactolian* suddenly became intensely curious as to the identity and antecedents of Swappem and Co. Stockton had kept himself carefully behind the scenes while his partner, whose real name was Mr. Emanuel Moss, ran the business in the name of the firm.

Unhappily, this gentleman had been engaged in one or two doubtful transactions a year or two before he had started the business in which Stockton had become a partner, and these *The Pactolian* managed by some means to ferret out. A week later it came out with a scathing article, casting the most serious reflections upon the commercial reputation of Swappem and Co.

So serious indeed were they that there was nothing for it but an action for libel to clear the reputation of the firm by proving that the matters alluded to by *The Pactolian* had not the slightest connection with it as Swappem and Co., and that its hands were as clean as the nature of its business permitted it to be—that is to say, as clean as those of any other highly respectable firm in the same line.

It was a battle of money against money. Both sides had plenty, eminent counsel, silks and juniors were engaged to do battle for the veracity and public spirit of the defendants and the reputation and *bona fides* of the plaintiffs. Several weeks were occupied in the usual interlocutory proceedings which are so deftly contrived to swell the expenses of a law-suit, and at last the day of trial arrived.

It had been decided by the legal wisdom enlisted on their side that, for the purposes of the lawsuit, Swappem and Co. should be represented in court by Mr. Stockton, whose financial record was absolutely irreproachable, and that Mr. Emanuel Moss should be considered merely as the manager employed by him, the capitalist who had found the money to develop the business.

It was in accordance with this astute arrangement that Stockton found himself seated in the well of Court No. 3 of the Queen's Bench Division on the morning of

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the trial beside his solicitor, listening to the eloquent opening speech of Mr. Jiggers, Q.C., his leading counsel. The speech was not over when the Court rose for luncheon, and as he got up from his seat to go out, Stockton took a look round the crowded court, and to his horror, saw his old friend Bentley on the opposite side engaged in earnest conversation with the solicitor for the defence. He recovered himself in a moment sufficiently to ask his own solicitor:

"Who is the man talking to the solicitor on the other side?"

"That? Oh, don't you know him. That's Mr. Frederick Matthews, the editor of *The Pactolian*, the man who wrote the article containing the libels. He's here to give evidence in justification."

The strange name puzzled Stockton not a little, but there was no doubt in his mind as to the identity of the man who bore it. Like a flash it crossed his mind that this man could give him penal servitude if he liked.

True, in the old days he had promised never to open his mouth on the subject of that dark deed in the bye-street in Southwark; but five years had gone by since then, and men change with time. What reason, therefore, had he for believing that Bentley, or Matthews, would now keep the promise that he had made under such very different circumstances?

He slipped out of court by the other door and went out into the Strand to think the situation over. He had grown a beard and had otherwise considerably altered in personal appearance, but when he was put into the witness-box, as he would be that afternoon, with all eyes upon him, Bentley's included, the dangers of recognition would still be very great. He turned the problem over and over again in his mind, and at last determined to take the bull by the horns. If his former chum meant mischief it would be bound to come sooner or later, and it might as well come sooner.

Thus thinking, he retreated his steps and turned into the Law Courts again. In the entrance hall who should he meet but Bentley, face to face. Acting on the impulse of the moment, he went up to him, held out his hand, and said:

"Well, Bentley, old man, and so we are to meet as enemies after all these years. How did you come to change your name?"

Bentley stared blankly at him for a few seconds, and then a smile of recognition broke over his face as he clasped Stockton's hand heartily and said:

"Why, Stockton, you don't mean to say it's you! So you're Swappem and Co.—are you?—and I'm the editor of *The Pactolian*. Well, I'll be hanged! Come and crack a bottle with me, old man, before the fight begins again."

They adjourned to an adjoining restaurant and cracked a bottle, but the fight did not begin again. When Mr. Jiggers rose after luncheon, it was to ask for an adjournment pending a proposed settlement between the parties. Of course, the adjournment was granted, and the case was settled out of court.

That night the head of the firm of Swappem and Co. dined *tête-à-tête* with the editor and proprietor of *The Pactolian*, and, as a result of certain information conveyed by the latter to the former, a certain Mr. Alfred Johnson, of Wickham Market, Suffolk, received on the day but one following, to his intense astonishment, a registered envelope containing five £100 notes, round which was wrapped a half sheet of note-paper on which was typewritten the single line:

"In grateful repayment of a forced loan."

GEORGE GRIFFITH.

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

On account of the August Bank Holiday, all the following papers will be on sale on Friday, July 29th.

"Pearson's Weekly," dated August 6th.
"Short Stories," dated August 6th.
"Home Notes," dated August 6th.
"Pearson's Magazine," for August.
"Isobel's Dressmaking at Home," for August.
"Home Cookery," for August.

- - M. A. P. - -

Makes A Pleasant
Magazine And Paper,
Most y All Paragraphs;
Much After Pearson's.
Matter Agreeably Presented.
Masterly And Pithy.
Modest And Prudent.
Must Always Progress.
Many Admirable Phrases,
Metaphrase, And Paraphrase.
Marvellously Abridged Personalities,
Maternal And Paternal,
Metropolitan And Provincial.
Miscellaneous Additions Perhaps
May Arise Presently:
Music, Art, Painting,
Mechanical And Political.
Mistakes Acknowledged Promptly;
Many Are Prevented.
Management Are Practical
Men, And Promise
More Attractions; Probably
Memoirs, Annals, Prizes;
Many Appreciate Pencil-cases.

Wanted, a Perfect Pipe.

A PRIZE OF £10 OFFERED.

P.W. offers the substantial prize of £10 to the inventor of what we consider to be, after a fair trial, the best all-round, inexpensive pipe.

We shall not undertake to put the winning pipe upon the market or to finance it in any way.

All models must reach this office, together with clear instructions as to the method of using, not later than Tuesday, August 2nd.

If sufficient postage accompanies each attempt, the models will be returned at the discretion of the editor who, however, does not hold himself responsible for loss or damage.

What do Dreams Mean?

We recently made the acquaintance of a lady who has made the laws of Oneirology a life study, and her explanations we have found to be singularly true in cases upon which we have consulted her. She has the reputation of being the most expert person in the world in this science. Accordingly we have made arrangements with her to give the fullest information to any reader of this paper who cares to send asking her advice. Readers should be very careful to explain in the fullest manner the whole extent of their dream. MADAME GEORGES will reply, giving a full explanation.

Readers should address their letters to "DREAMS," *Short Stories* Offices, Henrietta Street, Strand, W.C., and inclose six penny stamps and a stamped addressed envelope for reply.

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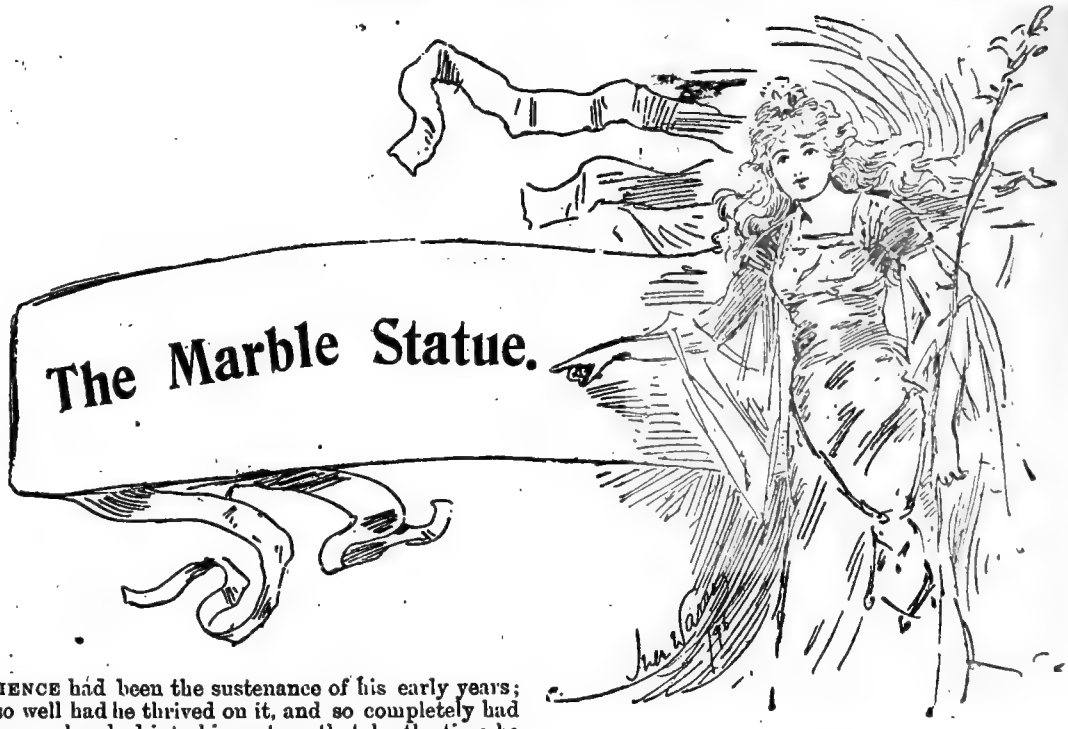

The Marble Statue.

Science had been the sustenance of his early years; and so well had he thrived on it, and so completely had it become absorbed into his system, that by the time he reached man's estate it was not only a part of his life—it was all of it. His wife, his home, his child, were mere incidents, and entirely subservient.

It was characteristic of the Professor that if he took up a subject, he became absolutely engrossed in it. He was not one to study superficially. So, when hypnotism attracted his attention, he not only devoured all obtainable lore upon the subject, but he went to India and to Egypt, and delved to the uttermost depths of its mysteries.

About the time he completed his investigations in the Orient, his unassuming little wife passed quietly into a state of higher intelligence than even her scientific spouse had attained—that is, she died. Her legacy to the Professor was Winifred, dearly beloved and only child.

In his lucid intervals the Professor loved his daughter to the verge of adoration; in his scientific moments she was something not quite so dear as his books, his antiquities, and his instruments. Still, even then, Winifred was a useful adjunct, and thus escaped being an encumbrance.

She tried hard to be a companion to him, to be interested in the dry tomes over which he was for ever poring; she endeavoured to store her mind with their abstruse contents that she might discourse intelligently in their evenings together; and if her success as a scientific conversationalist was not remarkable, at least she was a good listener.

She would sit at his feet, to all appearances in rapt attention; but whether or not the thoughts behind that earnest, interested expression were always exactly relevant, is a question between Winifred's conscience and herself. Sometimes it would occur to the learned man that he was taking that feminine mind far beyond its depth; and he would pause and sigh. He often told her she had no potentiality for great things. He would say, and shake his head dolefully:

"I suppose you are a beautiful woman, Winifred; but what has beauty ever done to solve the great problems of the world, and the mystery of life? I would much rather you had been gifted with a high order of intelligence."

It was shortly after they had settled down together that the masterpiece was conceived and executed. It had been formulating in his mind for months, and his laboratory had been the scene of extensive experiments. At last, one evening, the preparations were completed, and all was in readiness for the final test.

He waited until the servants had retired, then called his daughter; and when she had entered the room wondering, he carefully closed and locked the door.

"My daughter," he began solemnly, "I am on the eve of a great discovery—the greatest discovery of all the ages. Its full scope is incomprehensible, its possibilities are unbounded. It will seem a miracle to you when I tell you it means the perpetuation of life, the annihilation of death. Now the time has come when I must weigh my belief in the balance of practical experiment, and in this I need your assistance."

Winifred assured him she was only too glad to be of any use.

"Listen carefully, then. I want to hypnotise you into a state of syncope, in which case your muscles will be dormant but your senses alert. The vital forces, while retaining their full vitality, will suspend activity during the period for which I hold you under the influence, and you will remain in any fixed position until I remove the influence.

"Do you see the possibilities? Its usefulness is manifold. If a man became mentally depressed, for instance, instead of committing suicide he would simply put himself away for a time until matters brightened. Then look at it from a standpoint of domestic economy; when a man is out of work and cannot provide for his

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family, he will 'put them away' till business revives. It can also be used for recuperation, and thus save millions of money in summer resort bills. Its uses are infinite."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed his listener.

"But," continued the Professor, "that is only one step of my discovery. The second is what I may call its artistic development. You can, of course, understand that unless places were especially provided for these dormant bodies, it might be somewhat gruesome to have them about the house. So I have thought of making them artistic, of posing them as statuary; and to that end I have invented a marble enamel, in which the body, after being hypnotised, is submerged. The enamel hardens in a few hours, and the person is encased, to all appearance, in a coating of the finest Carrara marble."

"A living statue!" cried Winifred, clasping her hands. "What a glorious idea!"

"Yes," he went on, pleased at her enthusiasm, "and now the question is, have you the courage to undertake your part for the cause of science, and be 'put away' until to-morrow, say, when I will bring you back to life?"

"I will get ready at once," cried the girl, jumping up with alacrity. "I have a Grecian costume that I used once in *tableaux vivants* at college when I posed as the blind girl. I am not in the least afraid, but I would like to know how I look when I am hypnotised and marbleised. Will you take a photograph of me, so that I may see myself afterwards?"

He said he would, called her a brave girl, and watched her with loving eyes as she tripped from the room.

* * * * *

The Professor stood trembling with excitement before his masterpiece. Success, perfect and complete, had rewarded his efforts. The silence of midnight was over the outside world, and within the laboratory his own heavy breathing was the only sound. He stood before his statue panting with the exhilaration of his joy.

If art had carved that statue, with what strides would its creator have ascended to the pinnacle of fame! He was overcome, and with his face in his shaking hands murmured brokenly:

"I am frightened at my success, Winifred. My brain is in a whirl. Perhaps you are but a phantasm, after all." He rose and walked about the room, and finally sank upon a couch in a distant corner.

"I will lie here and watch till morning," he thought; "then I will waken her."

But his nerves were under too high tension to be quieted. He tossed from side to side. He grew feverish.

"I will take a sedative," he said at last. "This excitability is unlike me; I cannot stand it."

Ten minutes later the Professor was stretched upon his back; the sedative had responded quickly—the Professor was asleep. And the statue stood guard with outstretched hand, while the small hours grew larger and the quiet in the street grew more intense.

Did she hear stealthy footsteps outside the door? Did she feel its cautious opening? Did she see an evil face appear at the aperture? No, she was blind, she could not see.

"Hist! Bill," said a voice, "look alive now. Take whatever ye can get ahold of in a hurry. Oh! That statue made me jump. We'll take it along; it looks valible. Lively, now! Look out ye don't break it,—won't be no good if ye do. Go easy; don't wake the old duffer."

* * * * *

The apartment was luxurious, and its owner, stretched at ease to the full of his six-foot length among multi-coloured pillows, was pleasing to look upon. He was one who could take his ease gracefully; indolence was a part of his inheritance.

In straight line with the direction of his vision, in a niche, between parted curtains, bathed in prismatic colours from the cut-glass globe of an incandescent lamp, stood a life-sized marble figure of a Greek girl, with outstretched hand and tender, drooping eyelids.

The man among the pillows looked at the figure before him. It had been there only a few days, but he had got into the habit of talking to it as he smoked his pipe after dinner.

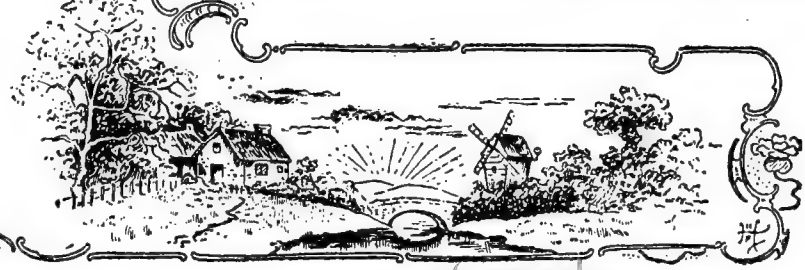
"Ah, Nydia," he said softly, "I believe I would have given all my fortune, if the villain had asked it, to possess you. How you got into that wretched little curiosity shop I don't know. I don't want to know. I asked him no questions. I paid what he wanted, and had you brought here at once before anyone could claim you; and now I wonder how I lived without you so long.

"I will not think of you as marble. I know there is a soul within that stone. I know it because I feel it. It draws me to you. It is like the magnetism of a living person.

"I don't understand it, but it is so. And now, you shall be my confidante. I am lonely; there is no living soul to whom I would tell my thoughts, but I will to you.

"I will tell you first, little blind girl, that I am not happy. I ought to be? Yes, I suppose so. I am a strong

Look out for the August Number of PEARSON'S MAGAZINE.



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able-bodied fellow with a good digestion, no nerves, and plenty of money.

"I think I might be happy if I were not so useless—so superfluous. I am tired of doing things for myself. What does it amount to? No one else is pleased because I happen to be. Life is nothing without incentive, Nydia, I am convinced of it.

"I will draw your curtain now, for I am due at a great lady's. We will talk again to-morrow."

* * * * *

"I am going to hold your hand, Nydia, while I talk. I am glad it is marble; you would not let me if it were not. When I hold it close for a few minutes it grows warm; I feel it throb. Don't tell me it is the throb of my own veins; I know better. I will warm you into life yet, you will see.

"I am going to tell you about Maisie to-night. I am thinking of marrying Maisie. Do you know, little girl, I am getting so maudlin about you that I actually imagined I saw your eyelids quiver when I said that. Oh, about Maisie! She is a charming girl—everyone says so—and we are very companionable; no doubt we should be the most congenial of couples. I have not asked her yet. I never seem to be in the mood, somehow—the proper degree of warmth seems to be lacking; but I shall, for I despair of ever having the proper degree of warmth for anyone, and I want to belong to someone and I want someone to belong to me.

"I am out of sorts to-night. You irritate me, Nydia. You are tantalising. I know quite well that you are only cold, hard stone; yet as I sit here and look at you I can hardly master the longing to take you in my arms. I would start out and hunt for the model who posed for you, but I know I should never find her. Your face haunts me continually. I am losing interest in everything else in the world. Some day you will tantalise me beyond endurance and I shall arise and crush you into dust—marble dust—and then I will sweep you up in a dust-pan and throw you out, and perhaps then I shall have peace.

"I have decided to speak to Maisie to-morrow. I must settle this; my mind is losing its balance. I can fancy myself in a padded cell, and those who come and look at me through the grating will say: 'Poor fellow, he loved a marble statue.' Nydia, Nydia, what is your power? I never thought my reason was weak—there were never any unbalanced minds in our race."

He paused in his soliloquy, for there seemed to be a commotion in the hall outside his rooms, and footsteps rushing up the stairs in frantic haste. Suddenly the door was flung open, and a man, dishevelled and wild, rushed in. The intruder stopped and looked eagerly about.

"Thank Heaven!" he ejaculated.

Tears in a torrent poured from his eyes. He started in the direction of Nydia, but the tall, athletic young man stepped between them.

"Be careful, man," he said quietly.

"Stand aside; she is mine."

"She is mine; dare lay one profane finger upon her and I will not hesitate to strike you down in an instant."

"Yours! She is mine; my daughter. Fool! Imbecile! Stand aside, I say!"

The two men grappled. The Professor was something of an athlete himself. Their bodies swayed from right to left as each struggled for the advantage. Furniture fell, the glass globes rattled. Once the younger man was down, but recovered immediately, and with all the concentrated power of his sinewy muscles he grasped the other and threw him prostrate.

The Professor gasped for breath.

"Let me up," he roared, when he could speak.

"I'll let you up when I have you in a straight waistcoat."

The Professor groaned in anguish of spirit.

"Fool!" he muttered.

Then, with one desperate effort, he lifted himself on his elbow, turned his face to the statue, and shrieked:

"Winifred, I command you, AWAKEN!!!"

There was a cracking, as of glass or porcelain breaking. The young man turned and staggered back against the wall. His Nydia was emerging from her chrysalis.

The warm tints of flesh and blood supplanted the dead white of the marble surface as it fell away. She stepped down from her pedestal, gave her draperies a truly feminine shake, and fell into the arms of her father—who, in the excitement, had been permitted to regain his feet.

"My child, can you forgive me?" he cried.

She looked over his shoulder archly at the figure against the wall.

"Fully and freely, my dear papa, absolutely and irrevocably, now and for ever."

She took a step in the direction of the other, and held out timidly a little hand, to which still clung a fragment of the marble enamel—but he made no move to take it. He stood spellbound, and simply stared.

"I used to wonder what you looked like," she said wistfully.

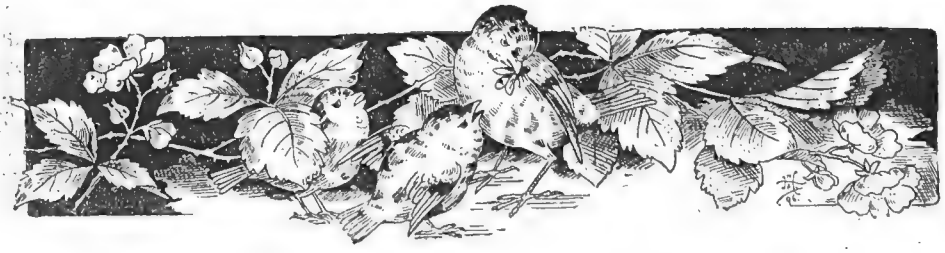
Still he remained motionless.

"Then you did not mean it?"

She turned back toward her father. There was a little catch in her voice; it seemed to break the spell which held him. The blood rushed back to his face, the life came back to his eyes; he took a step and caught the floating drapery before it was quite out of reach.

"Only give me a lifetime to prove it," he said.

F. Tomalin.



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Readily **Reduce Weight** and **Cure Corpulency Permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are very agreeable, harmless, and never fail to PRESERVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of diet. **Reduction begins immediately.**

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MR. BUTLER, Surgeon, Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient lost more than a stone.

Send 2/6 to **THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 56 Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.**

£20

Hairdressers fitted up. Estimates Free. Tobacconists Commencing. See Illustrated Guide (259 pages), free. How to open a cigar store, £20 to £2,000. Tobacconists Outfitting Company, 186 Euston Road, London. The largest and original house (50 years' reputation). Mgr., H. Myers.

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EXTRACT OF HERBS

6D. BOTTLE MAKES 8 GALLONS **BEER**

NON-INTOXICATING

The most palatable refreshing tonic drink producible.

IMITATED but NOT EQUALLED

Of all Chemists and Stores. Also try Mason's Wine Essences and Mason's Coffee Essence. Sample bottle of either of above post FREE for 9d. Two, assorted, 1s. 8d.; Three, assorted, 1s. 8d. *Agents Wanted.*

NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM.

The BEST BEVERAGE for YOUR MEALS.

HAVE YOU SEEN OUR CATALOGUE of Cheap Crockery? If not, please get a post-card and send it to

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and you will get it by return, together with particulars of the

MOST WONDERFUL PACKAGE OF CROCKERY THE WORLD HAS EVER SEEN

100 PIECES FOR £1 1s.

A Dinner Service of 50 pieces is included, which is guaranteed to be worth the guinea alone, and a China Tea Service of 28 pieces finished in gold, together with a lot of useful kitchen crockery.

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The Best Hair Dye

in the World for Lashes, Eyebrows, and Hair on the Head, with Moustache and Beard. For Ladies' Hair and for all Colours. Had at 3s. 6d., post 3s. 9d., of ALEX. ROSS, 62 Theobald's Road, High Holborn, London, W.C. Spanish Cantharides for fallen hair, 3s. 6d. 5s. 6d. & 10s. 6d.

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Paste or tablets, 1d. to 6d. All dealers.

SULPHOLINE LOTION,

For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

SHILLING BOTTLES.

Try **MASON'S**

KILLCORN

The only painless corn cure.

IT HAS NEVER BEEN KNOWN TO FAIL.

Thousands of Testimonials have been received from all grades of society.

READ THIS ONE. Painless Cure!

"Leeds, Mar. 17th.

"Dear Sir,—I had three most painful corns, which were PAINLESSLY REMOVED by using rather less than a bottle of KILLCORN. I now walk with the greatest ease.—Yours, O. B. CARR."

KILLCORN is sold by all Chemists, Stores, &c., in bottles at 1s. each, or sent direct on receipt of value in stamps by the Proprietor,

3, Guildford Street, Leeds.

NOSE MACHINE.

This is a contrivance by which the short cartilage of the nose is pressed into shape by wearing the instrument an hour daily for a short time. Price 10/6, sent free for stamps. ALEX ROSS, 62, Theobald's Road, London, opposite Bedford Row. Est. 1850. Parcel free from observation.

"JUNO" CYCLES ARE THE VERY BEST.

Monthly. Roadster, £10. 16/8
Road Racer, £11. 18/4
Lady & Gent, £12 12/- 21/-
£14 14/- 24/6
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Write for New Season's List of JUNO Cycles and Accessories.

JUNO Lady's Safety } £ s. Monthly sent post free.
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DESTROYS BUGS FLEAS MOTHS BEETLES

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IN FRIENDLY CONVERSE.

GARDENER. — Your raspberry canes should be placed in a rich and heavy soil, where no drought can reach them.

S. T.—Fusiliers were formerly soldiers armed with a lighter fusil or musket than the rest of the army, but at present all foot regiments carry the same pattern of rifle.

HOLIDAY MAKER asks: "Does the air at a seaside place contain salt?" ——Only when it is windy. The salt of sea-water cannot evaporate into the atmosphere, and it is only when the wind carries off salt spray held in suspension and derived from the wave crests that the air becomes impregnated.

W. A. L. wishes to know which is the largest fossil land animal of which we have any trace.——The Camarasaurus. (You had better practise a little before you attempt to pronounce it in public). The thigh bone of a specimen found about a year ago is six feet in length, and takes four men to lift it. The tail is about twenty-seven feet long and composed of gigantic vertebræ. It is estimated that this creature stood sixteen feet high.

S. I.—The general notion that Siberia is a deadly dull place—that there is no pleasure, no civilisation, nothing except a plentiful supply of misery—is erroneous. There are fashions and fashionable people in Siberia, and the traveller meets women as well dressed as in any European city.

CAUTIOUS wants to know if St. Paul's Cathedral is insured, and for what sum.——St. Paul's Cathedral is insured for about £95,000.

CANAL.—The oldest British canal is the Foss Dyke, in Lincolnshire. This is admittedly of Roman origin. It has been deepened and widened on two occasions; its length is about eleven miles. There was another Roman canal—the Caer Dyke—in the same county, but only the name remains.

S. C. N. puts the following question: "Why does severe and continued pain cause thirst?"——Pain, especially when accompanied by shock, not only stops the secretion of saliva, but weakens the heart's action, and this assists in causing thirst. When recovering from a fainting fit, people generally complain of thirst. Loss of blood has a similar effect.

SORROW.—The "sorrowful tree" is a singular plant, found on the Island of Goa, near Bombay. It flowers in the night only. At sunset there is not a flower to be seen, but within an hour the tree is full of them. As soon as the sun rises some fall off, and the others close up, and thus it goes on all the year round.

CYCLIST.—You cannot do better than choose France for the tour you are meditating. The roads there are really excellent. The Government keeps up a perfect system of care and inspection, and wherever you go you will be sure to find the roads in excellent order. They are often bordered with trees for miles, and are in a perfect state for cycling.

EDEL. — Yes, there is considerable danger of the extirpation of the much-prized Alpine plant, edelweiss, about which so much romance and poetry has been woven. Not only do tourists play havoc with it, but large quantities of roots are pulled up and exported. The Provincial Diets of Styria and Carniolia have passed laws forbidding the uprooting of the plant, the sale to tourists, and the exportation in large quantities by anyone.

S. S.—A lifeboat costs twenty-seven shillings a week to maintain.

C. K. J.—Perhaps the nearest approach to exact similarity between the dresses of both sexes is to be found among the Chunchas, who live in the Montana district of Peru. Men and women both wear a single garment similar to the poncha, which is a shawl with a slit in the middle. The only difference is not in the garment itself, but in the wearing of it. The men wear it with the slit from shoulder to shoulder, and the women with it the other way, down the breast and the back.

H. R. S. T. writes to ask if the state of the weather has any effect upon the number of crimes committed.——Undoubtedly it has. November is, on the whole, the busiest month, for not only are the plain clothes policemen near the bridges obliged to keep a sharper look-out for would-be suicides, but also the dark, murky days are a great assistance to housebreakers and pickpockets. As a rule the rainy weather protects the public, for very few burglaries take place on a soaking wet night.

T. E.—The horn of the male narwhal is a specially developed upper tooth; it is sometimes nine or ten feet long. The tooth on the opposite side of the head, in the male, is a rudimentary affair, about ten inches in length, which is embedded in the jaw.

PRECIOUS.—In ancient times Tyre was the market for precious stones; later, Alexandria, Rome, and Constantinople had their turn. Venice was the chief market for a time in the middle ages. Of recent times Amsterdam and Antwerp have been prime centres—especially for diamonds—but London and Paris have taken their places now. As to your inquiry, "Where do most of the precious stones go?" the answer is that somewhere between one-third and one-half of the total production of the world go to the United States.

W. W. asks if it is true that the Pope never preaches.——Quite. Only once during three hundred years has this rule been broken. This was when Pius IX. was Pope.

MYRTLE wants to know what it costs to be presented to the Queen, and if there any privileges attached?——To be presented at Buckingham Palace costs at least fifty pounds, and the return for the outlay is nothing more substantial than having one's name in print. It gives the presentee, whether male or female, no right to again appear at Court, and it does not entail a single invitation to a function of royal or even semi-royal state. There may be a certain amount of satisfaction in being able to say that one was presented at Court, but I fail to appreciate it.

P. P. asks: "Is any animal mute under normal circumstances?" —— There are several examples among the mammalia. For instance, the giraffe, the armadillo, and the porcupine, are all unprovided with vocal cords, the whales can only produce a snorting sound.

RECRUIT is anxious to know whether it is more painful to die from a sword-thrust or a bullet wound.——Although I cannot speak from experience, I am told the latter causes the greatest agony. This conclusion is arrived at from the fact that amongst the dead on the battlefield after an engagement, the expression on the faces of the men who have died from a sword thrust is generally of peaceful repose, while those who owe their death to a bullet wound show traces of agony and suffering.

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NO TIME TO LOSE. **100** NO TIME TO LOSE.

BICYCLE PRIZES.

Ladies' or Gents' £23 A.B. Cycles.

WHAT TO DO.—Make up the best sentence you can of eighteen words. The first letter of each word commencing with a letter of "NOVEL ADVERTISEMENT,," in any order. Thus: "*O*ur *V*aluable *L*ight *R*oadsters *E*arn *E*very *E*xcellent *T*estimonial *T*hat *N*umerous *D*elighted *V*otaries *S*end; *N*ot *M*entioning *I*ncreasing *E*arnest *A*dmirers." It will be seen that the initials of each word, when transposed, form the phrase "NOVEL ADVERTISEMENT." The above sentence is only given as an example of what we mean, and must not be sent in.

AN ABSOLUTELY FREE COMPETITION.

We ask you to buy nothing before allowing you to participate in the Prizes. Neither after you have won a prize (if you are fortunate enough to do so) do we compel you to purchase any accessories. You pay nothing to enter, and even if you receive one of our regret notices—and we make no secret of the fact that hundreds are unsuccessful—you are only out of pocket for the cost of two penny stamps, which the Post Office get the benefit of. Thus we can honestly and truthfully assert of this thoroughly genuine Competition that it is

ABSOLUTELY FREE TO ALL.

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First Prize, £23 A.B. Safety, fitted with A.B. tyres.

The following ladies and gentlemen are amongst the number of persons who have recently received free bicycles, each of whom have signed a Solemn Declaration that he or she is in no way connected either directly or indirectly with this firm. We will forfeit £1,000 if this statement is incorrect. A few Free Cycle Winners: Mr. Geo. A. Haynes, 9 Windsor Street, Barrow-in-Furness; Miss Mary Page-Henderson, 8 Lexham Gardens, Kensington, W.; Mr. A. Merrilees, Harvay, Orkney; Mr. A. J. Woolnough, 29 Thomson Street, Govan, Glasgow; Mrs. M. Fraser, Haglefort Shinrone, Ireland, etc., etc.

Second Class (9 prizes) £23 Cycle for £9
Third Class (12 prizes) £23 Cycle for £10
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Consolation (25 prizes) £23 Cycle for £14

COMPETITION CLOSES AUG. 2, 1898.

Winners of prizes must clear them within a week or ten days, otherwise machines unclaimed will be passed on to the next in rotation. Prizes may be considerably increased in all or any one class. Unless stamp is enclosed for postage of Catalogue and Result of Competition, the Company will not guarantee to inform competitors of their success. Prize-winners need not purchase any accessories with their machines, unless they so desire. As the majority of competitors may not be able to call and inspect the machines, **we guarantee to refund the full amount** paid for a Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, or for a Consolation Prize (less carriage), **if the owner is not perfectly satisfied** with it on arrival. We cannot give any money or other prizes in lieu of cycles, and consequently cannot enter into any discussion relating thereto. We have no agents. All Machines Guaranteed for Twelve Months.

£100

We offer this Reward to any lady or gentleman able to prove that we have ever in the whole course of our existence sold our cheapest machines under £15 cash either to an ordinary customer, agent, dealer or shipper. We do not allow a shilling extra discount beyond the 34 per cent. off the catalogue price. A machine possessing all those sterling qualities which make a really first-class machine of the highest grade cannot be purchased anywhere in the United Kingdom under £15 cash. Every experienced cyclist knows that.

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Notice.—"**DOLLY**" **Blue** is neatly tied in a white bag to a small handle to hold by whilst using. It is the cheapest and best Laundry Blue in the market. "Dolly" Blue is sold by all Grocers and Oilmen at **1d.** per bag.

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"**DOLLY**" **Cream Colour**, for Tinting Curtains, Muslins, Laces, Silks, Blouses, etc., a Rich Cream Shade.
"**DOLLY**" **Tints**, manufactured in Six Shades—Pink, Terra Cotta, Old Gold, Heliotrope, Sea Green, and Canary Yellow—for Tinting Faded Ribbons, Laces, etc. Sold everywhere, **1d.** per bag. Will wash out when required.

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